

# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

*or* AWAKENED INDIA

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order  
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896



December 2015

Vol. 120, No. 12

₹ 10.00

# THE ROAD TO WISDOM

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON

## *Reason versus Religion—VIII*

**W**e have seen that if any theory of religion can stand the test of modern reasoning, it is the Advaita. A generalisation ending in the Personal God can never be universal, for, first of all, to conceive of a Personal God we must say, He is all-merciful, all-good. But this world is a mixed thing, some good and some bad. We cut off what we like, and generalise that into a Personal God! Just as you say a Personal God is this and that, so you have also to say that He is not this and not that. And you will always find that the idea of a Personal God has to carry with it a personal devil. That is how we clearly see that the idea of a Personal God is not a true generalisation, we have to go beyond, to the Impersonal. In that the universe exists, with all its joys and miseries, for whatever exists in it has all come from the Impersonal. What sort of a God can He be to whom we attribute evil and other things? The idea is that both good and evil are different aspects, or manifestations of the same thing. The idea that they were two was a very wrong idea from the first, and it has been the cause of a good deal of the misery in this world of ours—the idea that right and wrong are two separate things, cut and dried, independent of each other, that good and evil are two eternally separable and separate things. I should be very glad to see a man who could show me something



which is bad all the time. As if one could stand and gravely define some occurrences in this life of ours as good and good alone, and some which are bad and bad alone. That which is good today may be evil tomorrow. What is good for me may be bad for you. The conclusion is that like every other thing, there is an evolution in good and evil too. There is something which in its evolution, we call, in one degree, good, and in another, evil. The storm that kills my friend I call evil, but that may have saved the lives of hundreds of thousands of people by killing the bacilli in the air. They call it good, but I call it evil. So both good and evil belong to the relative world, to phenomena. The Impersonal God we propose is not a relative God; therefore it cannot be said that It is either good or bad, but that It is something beyond, because It is neither good nor evil. Good, however, is a nearer manifestation of It than evil.

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**F**rom *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2013), 1.386–7.



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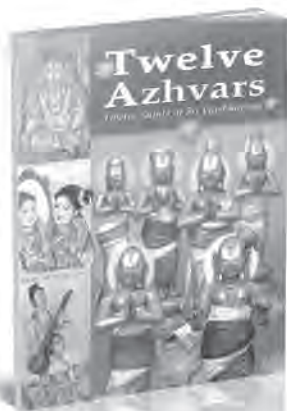


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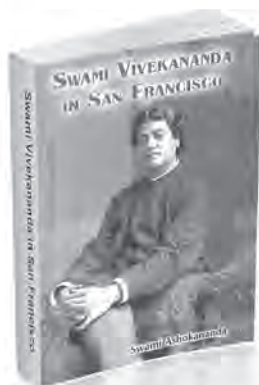


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By Swami Ashokananda



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# TRADITIONAL WISDOM

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*Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!*

## Maitrayaniya Upanishad

December 2015

Vol. 120, No. 12

### मैत्रायणीयोपनिषत्

स वा एष आत्मेहोशन्ति कवयः सितासितैः कर्मफलैरनभिभूत इव प्रति शरीरेषु चरत्यव्यक्तत्वात्  
सौक्ष्म्याददृश्यत्वादग्राह्यत्वान्निर्ममत्वाच्चानवस्थोऽसति कर्ताऽकर्तैवावस्थः स वा एष शुद्धः स्थिरोऽ-  
चलश्चालेप्योऽव्यग्रो निःस्पृहः प्रेक्षकवदवस्थितः स्वस्थश्च । ऋतुभुक् गुणमयेन पटेनात्मानमन्तर्धया-  
वस्थिता इत्यवस्थिता इति ॥ २.७ ॥ इति द्वितीयः प्रपाठकः ॥

*Sa va esha atmeboshanti kavayah sitasitaih karmaphalair anabhibhuta iva prati sharireshu  
charaty-avyaktatvat saukshmyad-adrishyatvad-agrahyatvan-nirmamatvach-cha-anavastho'sati  
karta'kartairvavasthah sa va esha shuddhah sthiro'chalashchalepyo'vyagro nihsprihah  
prekshakavad-avasthitah svasthashcha. Ritabhuk gunamayena patena-atmanam antardhaya-  
avasthita ity-avasthita iti. (2.7) Iti dvitiyah prapatakah.*

Indeed, the sages say that this self wanders here on earth from one body to the other, apparently unaffected by the light and dark effects of actions. It being unmanifest, subtle, imperceptible, ungraspable, free from ego, the self is only apparently unabiding and doer only in the unreal—in reality it is not a doer and is abiding. Indeed, it is pure, steadfast, unswerving, stainless, unagitated, desireless, and remains fixed like a spectator and abiding in one's own self. As an enjoyer of right action, it covers itself with a veil made of qualities, but remains fixed; yes, it remains fixed. (2.6) Thus ends the second chapter.



# THIS MONTH

**W**HAT IS THE POWER OF SPEECH and how does it influence our minds? How is speech created and how do certain words and syllables acquire power? These are pertinent questions that have to be understood to understand some fundamental spiritual practices common to faith traditions around the world. These concepts are analysed in **The Power of Words**.

Sri Sarada Devi was the embodiment of women empowerment, albeit not in the narrow sense of the term so common in present society. This **Empowerment of a Different Kind** is described by Sandipan Sen, Assistant Professor of political science at Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira, Belur Math. This is an edited version of a paper presented by the author at the University Grants Commission, India sponsored 'Refresher Course' titled 'Gendering Empowerment' for college and university teachers held from 27 February to 18 March 2008 at the Women's Studies Research Centre, Calcutta University, Alipore Campus.

Many manuscripts of Swami Vivekananda are getting discovered even today. The exact number of his writings and letters are still unknown and probably will never be known with finality. He used to sing a song, which was liked very much by his master Sri Ramakrishna. Vandana Jani, a researcher and the co-founder of Vivekananda Vidyapith, Wayne, New Jersey, has found the English transcreation of this Hindi song in Swamiji's own hand and presents her findings in **Swami Vivekananda's Unpublished Transcreation of 'A Hindu Song of Praise'**.

Swami Vivekananda had a huge impact on India after he spoke at the Parliament of World Religions in Chicago in 1893. Thereafter, his speeches and travels were closely followed by the press in various countries, including India. The Marathi press also covered his speeches. Dr Suruchi Pande, vice chairperson, Ela Foundation, Pune and head, Department of Ethno-Ornithology, MES Garware College, Pune, writes the first article in a series that will cover the Marathi press reports of Swamiji in **Swami Vivekananda and Others in the Kesari and Mahratta Newspapers**.

The discovery of the Higgs Boson has opened up new possibilities for a better understanding of the human mind. Dr Saibal Gupta, a renowned cardiothoracic surgeon and cultural historian from Kolkata, examines the findings of quantum mechanics and the connections between **The Higgs Boson and the Human Mind**.

In the concluding instalment of the article **In Search of Possible Physical Laws in Spirituality**, Gopal C Bhar, honorary Professor of physics at the Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda University, analyses the concepts of subjectivity and objectivity, explains how spirituality is about the subtle, and gives some examples of the mirroring of physical laws in spirituality.

The late Zoltan Torey, who was a clinical psychologist and an independent scholar, wrote the book **The Conscious Mind**, exploring the emergence of the human mind from the brain. From this book, we bring you this month's *Manana*.

# *The Power of Words*

**W**HAT ARE WORDS? They are the first manifestations of our ignorance. They are the first signs of the perceived embodiment of the disembodied Atman. Om is the first form of such manifestation and from that primal word comes into existence countless words that create and represent this manifold universe born out of the primal ignorance. Essentially, a word is an idea that has taken a form. Speech is the manifestation of ideas. Every manifestation is a dilution of the inherent that manifests in such a manner. A flower is but a diluted manifestation of the seed that can give birth to numerous fruits and flowers. All power is diminished through manifestation. However, ironically only its manifestation can point to the presence of any power. So, ignorance produces manifestations and every manifestation brings in dilution. That means, to understand the inherent power, the manifestation of that power has to be reduced or made less pronounced. To understand words, we have to understand ideas and to understand ideas; we need to understand the mind.

Do words and syllables carry any power? Faith traditions across the world emphasise the inherent power of certain words and syllables. How can a word or syllable possess some power seemingly even with respect to people who do not understand the language these words and syllables are written in? There are many words of classical languages like Sanskrit, Arabic, Hebrew, and Latin, which are supposed to have some power even when uttered by people who have no knowledge whatsoever of these languages. How can

that happen? Nonetheless, there are numerous people around the world who will vouchsafe for the power of these words and syllables. This only shows that ideas and notions attributed to a word

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**Silence leads to speech. A meditative silence leads to a profound expression.**

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and realisations experienced by the chanting of or meditation on some words adds to their power. This is the underlying idea behind the concept of mantras in the Indian tradition. The most common objection to the practice and efficacy of chanting of mantras is that how can an innocuous sounding word or syllable bring about a great transformation in one's life and worldview. A word or syllable gets its power by the spiritual practices it has been used for by numerous persons across centuries. The person who imparts the knowledge of a word or syllable is also instrumental in that if she or he has realised some fundamental spiritual truths by meditating on these words or syllables, they become all the more powerful, when such persons give this wisdom to someone else.

Since words are a diluted representation of the ideas behind them, and since ideas are born in the mind, every word coming from a person of a disciplined and controlled mind is highly powerful and can shake the whole world. To understand this we need to understand how a plant grows. A plant comes from a seed. If a seed is planted in a soil that is properly cultivated and is highly fertile, the plant that grows out of such a seed will be very healthy and would


produce more fruits. However, the same seed planted in an uncared for or a barren land will produce a poor plant or may not even germinate. This is what happens with a word planted in an untrained mind. The complete meaning and all the ideas associated with a word manifest in full power in a highly trained mind.

Association of ideas with words and the effect they produce on the listeners' minds is something we see in our everyday lives. For instance, a person may utter the word 'love' with no genuine feeling associated with it and the listener does not feel anything but if a person utters the word 'hate' with nothing but love in mind the listener feels the upsurge of love in one's heart. So, it is not sufficient if one utters a word but it is imperative that the word is accompanied by the respective thought. In spiritual life too, it is important that one utters various mantras with the strong association of the relevant ideas and concepts in the mind. It is very common to see spiritual aspirants get carried away by the number of times they utter a mantra. However, even if one repeats a mantra for a great number of times, if the idea associated with the mantra is not prominent in one's mind, the effect of such repetition would be negligible. It follows that if a person thinks of some ideas or concepts very strongly and does not utter them in words or syllables, still those ideas will take effect if produced in a highly trained and regulated mind. So, to make a word powerful, the ideas and the ground of these ideas, the mind, has to be powerful. A focused mind is the ground for great ideas and greater words.

Silence leads to speech. Contrary though it may seem, it is nevertheless true. A meditative silence leads to a profound expression. Such expression could be verbal or non-verbal. The thoughts of a person with a regulated mind speak without the medium of words. The very

being of a person rooted in oneself will be an expression of the thoughts at the core of one's mind. Cultivation of silence—not just by being silent outside, not by just refraining from speaking, but being silent at the mind and curbing the impressions of the mind from bubbling up, by stilling the mind—would enable one to generate powerful and pure thoughts and words.

Words that are free from the stain of desire are the most effective. Thoughts that do not see their end in the acquisition or enjoyment of things or persons but fulfil by their own momentum, by letting their energy take its course, are thoughts that are the most powerful. Just like a person free from any fetters can move fast, a thought free of desire can create a profound effect. To have a powerful speech, one has to be closer to the seed of speech, the thought and the mind. One has to be closer to the source of all speech, a covering on which reality produces speech. By understanding one's true nature, a person can speak more effectively. Both on the secular and spiritual planes, one can be more effective in thought and word only when one has a correct understanding of one's life and its goal.

The goal of one's life should be to come face to face with the source of all speech, the source of all thought—the Atman or Brahman. That requires one to annihilate the mind by going to its root, ignorance. To wade through the veils of mind and numerous desires one has to spend some time with it, a time unhindered by the countless pulls of the external world and focused on the mind alone. The more and more one spends such time analysing one's mind, the more and more mind loses its strength and the more and more distinct becomes the light of the Atman. Mind is just an illusion. Understanding it is its nemesis. By understanding the mind one can control it, and by controlling it, one can produce powerful thoughts and powerful words. 



# Empowerment of a Different Kind: The Life and Teachings of Sri Sarada Devi

Sandipan Sen



IN HER INTRODUCTION TO *The Second Sex*, the eminent French feminist Simone de Beauvoir, posed the fundamental questions concerning women's situation and empowerment:<sup>1</sup>

Now, what peculiarly signalizes the situation of woman is that she—a free and autonomous being like all human creatures—nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the Other. They propose to stabilize her as object and to doom her to immanence since her transcendence is to be overshadowed and for ever transcended by another ego (*conscience*) which is essential and sovereign. The drama of woman lies in this conflict between the fundamental aspirations of every subject (ego)—who always regards the self as the essential and the compulsions of a situation in which she is the inessential. How can a human being in woman's situation attain fulfilment? What roads are open to her? Which are blocked? How can independence be recovered in a state of dependency? What circumstances limit woman's liberty and how can they be overcome? These are the fundamental questions on which I would fain throw some light. This means that I am interested in the fortunes of the individual as defined not in terms of happiness but in terms of liberty.<sup>2</sup>

Two things seem to be very important to us from Beauvoir's analysis. First, as autonomous

human beings women must have the right to attain fulfilment; and second, liberty should be given precedence over happiness for true empowerment of the women. If we consider these as fundamental parameters for women's empowerment, then perhaps, we may benefit from discussing the story of a woman of late nineteenth century and early twentieth century Bengal—Sri Sarada Devi.

## ***The Story of Sri Sarada Devi***

Sarada Devi was born in December 1853 in a small rural family in Jayrambati village in the Bankura district of Bengal. She was the eldest child of Ramachandra Mukhopadhyay and Shyamasundari Devi. She had one sister and four brothers. At the age of five she was married to the twenty-three year old Gadadhar Chattopadhyay of nearby Kamarpukur village, who later came to be known as Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. Gadadhar used to live at the Dakshineswar temple compound as a priest. He was leading an austere life with rigorous spiritual practices and seemed to be a lunatic to the public eyes. Hearing all this, Sarada Devi visited her husband at Dakshineswar in 1872 and started living with him. There she used to take care of her husband, her mother-in-law, and the devotees

who came to see Sri Ramakrishna. After the demise of Sri Ramakrishna, Sarada Devi spent most of her time in Kamarpukur and Jayrambati. There she had to struggle with terrible poverty and social restrictions for about ten years. After that she was invited by the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna to come to the city of Calcutta. Then she started travelling to places of pilgrimage all over India. All through this period she continued her spiritual practices meticulously. In 1897 when the Ramakrishna Mission was founded, Swami Vivekananda declared her to be the spiritual leader or the mother of the monastic order. Since then she had to tackle her domestic affairs on the one hand and the spiritual as well as some key policy matters of the Ramakrishna Mission, on the other. But she performed these two very different roles from her domestic confines. She passed away in 1920, at the age of sixty-seven.

Sri Sarada Devi had no formal education. She could read, but could not write. But she had an inquisitive mind, a keen memory, and creative intelligence. Apparently she was a quiet village woman who was deified by the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna after his demise and enshrined as the 'Holy Mother' or the mother of the Order. But that deification could not bring any change in her life against her wishes or 'marginalise' her from mundane life. She continued to lead her life with her mother and brothers alongside monks and devotees. She took personal care of everyone who came to her and at the same time guided spiritual aspirants through simple advice. Sri Sarada Devi had never delivered a lecture or wrote a book. She just spent her life as it came to her and faced its challenges with unspeakable ease and spontaneity. And through her household chores and her day-to-day conversations she has left a unique discourse of 'empowerment' that may inspire us even today. To have a glimpse of this unique discourse we would mention a few

incidents of her life as well as some of her observations concerning our theme. For the sake of better understanding we may discuss one particular aspect of her personal life, that is, her conjugal life, at first. Then we may draw our attention to some of the incidents and observations from her life, which are concerned with more 'public' issues. Our objective would be to see how Sri Sarada Devi had fought her battle for the fulfilment of her personality, how she could influence her situation, and how far her story is relevant to the modern discourse on women's empowerment.

### ***The Account of a Unique Marital Life***

Apparently Sri Sarada Devi's life does not look like anything extraordinary, but a closer look into it will reveal the opposite. At the age of nineteen, when she came to meet her husband in Dakshineswar, near Calcutta, he asked for her permission to carry on his spiritual practices. Without hesitation she replied: 'I have come only to help you in the path of religious life.'<sup>3</sup> It was a huge sacrifice from her side, but she did not want to resist her husband from pursuing his chosen lifestyle. It is seen in India that sometimes people renounce their family for the sake of God. But in this case, although Sri Ramakrishna treated his wife Sri Sarada Devi as a mortal embodiment of the Mother Goddess and even formally worshipped her; yet he did not *renounce* her. Rather, he *accepted* her and took every care for her well-being. Thus, it was a unique phenomenon. Sri Sarada Devi had showed enormous courage to face such unprecedented incidents in her personal life and yet she remained fully composed.

Even though Sri Sarada Devi had high regard for Sri Ramakrishna, however, she did not accept his words that went against her judgement. There are several such instances. During her stay at Dakshineswar, Sri Sarada Devi used to prepare and take the meal to Sri Ramakrishna's room by

herself. Once, another woman hurriedly came and asked for the privilege to carry the meal. She gladly handed that over to her. Later, Sri Ramakrishna objected to that and requested her not to allow anyone to do this anymore. But Sri Sarada Devi politely declined: 'That I cannot; for if anyone wants something of me. I feel I must grant it' (44–5).

On another occasion Sri Ramakrishna had objected to Sri Sarada Devi's socialising with an aged woman who frequented her residence at Dakshineswar. The woman had a questionable moral life in the past and Sri Ramakrishna thought it could send wrong signals to the other devotees if Sri Sarada Devi entertained her. But she did not listen to him and continued to meet the old woman as usual. Later on, Sri Ramakrishna realised the situation and did not say anything anymore for that.

Once, an unknown woman, who appeared to be a bit insane, came to Dakshineswar. Actually she was a spiritual aspirant who used to practise the *madhura-bhava*, the path of treating God as one's lover. One day, she indiscreetly approached Sri Ramakrishna and expressed her longing for him. Sri Ramakrishna at once got annoyed and started abusing her loudly. Hearing all this from her residence nearby, Sri Sarada Devi immediately sent one of her attendants to bring the woman to her. Then she consoled her: 'My daughter, if he feels annoyed at your presence there, you can very well come to me' (50).

In a separate incident, Sri Ramakrishna once complained to Sri Sarada Devi that the increase in the number of chapattis that she was feeding one of his young disciples could adversely affect his spiritual life, as he would fail to get up early in the morning for meditation. She firmly replied: 'Why do you worry so much because he has eaten two Chapatis more? I shall look after their welfare. You need not find fault with them for eating' (ibid.).

All these incidents give a testimony about the firmness of the personality that Sri Sarada Devi had in her relation with Sri Ramakrishna, in spite of having the highest regard for him. Sri Ramakrishna also looked upon her in high esteem. He had never used an unkind word to her. One day, when he was taking rest in his room in Dakshineswar, Sri Sarada Devi entered with his meal. Sri Ramakrishna did not notice her and assuming that it was his niece Lakshmi, he asked her to shut the door while leaving the room. He had used the word *tui* in Bengali, which is usually used to address someone junior. When Sri Sarada Devi made a reply, he felt much embarrassed and said: 'Is it you? I thought it was Lakshmi. Please forgive me.' Sri Sarada Devi assured him that she did not mind anything. But Sri Ramakrishna was not quite satisfied. The next morning he went to her residence and again asked her to forgive him: 'Well, I could not sleep at all last night. I was so worried because I spoke to you rudely.' Referring to this Sri Sarada Devi used to say afterwards: 'I was married to a husband who never addressed me as "tui". Ah! How he treated me! Not even once did he tell me a harsh word or wound my feelings! He did not strike me even with a flower!' (51).

Sri Ramakrishna had not only respected Sri Sarada Devi, but also wanted her to take up—on a par with him—the task of spiritually elevating the skeptical modern men and women. Once he said to her: 'The people round about live like worms in darkness. You should look after them.' During his final days in Cossipore he asked her: 'Well, won't you do anything? Am I to do all?' Sri Sarada Devi replied: 'I am a woman. What can I do?' Sri Ramakrishna corrected her: 'No, no, you have much to do.' In later years, Sri Sarada Devi used to say: 'You must be aware that the Master looked upon all in the world as Mother. He left me behind for demonstrating that Motherhood



to the world' (47–8). Through this motherhood, as expressed in the course of Sri Sarada Devi's life, a unique empowering discourse had emerged. It had left silent but indelible marks not only in the personal lives of some spiritual aspirants around her but also upon the collective social psyche of that time in many ways.

### ***The Public Impact of a Personal Discourse***

We have already noted that in spite of being situated in a very unwelcome socio-economic and cultural surrounding, Sri Sarada Devi was able to cultivate a dignified personality and was never hesitant in her personal life in expressing her feelings or behaving in a manner that she considered correct. This was also true of her opinions and judgements expressed on 'public' matters and policies. We would like to mention here some such incidents.

After travelling throughout India as a mendicant monk, Swami Vivekananda was pondering over an idea of going to the West to attend the World Parliament of Religions to be held in Chicago in 1893. But he could not make up his mind. So he wrote to Sri Sarada Devi and sought her advice in this regard. Immediately she sent her permission and encouraged him to set out on the voyage. We must remember that at that time it was very difficult to agree to such a proposal. The Dakshineswar temple authorities were also reluctant to allow him to enter the Kali temple when he returned from the West on the same ground, that being a Hindu monk, Swami Vivekananda should not have crossed the sea and dined with the Westerners (144).

Again, on another occasion, there was a debate among the members of the newly found Ramakrishna Mission, founded in 1897, whether it was befitting for the monks to engage in philanthropic activities as that could deflect their minds from God and affect their spiritual life.

Sri Sarada Devi heard about the debate, but she did not pass any comment. Later, when she was visiting one of the hospitals run by the monks at Varanasi, she openly praised the efforts of the dedicated workers there and donated a sum of rupees ten to the hospital. That singular act had settled the debate once and for all (163).

In 1898, Calcutta was hit by a plague epidemic. The Ramakrishna Mission started their relief camps led by Sister Nivedita and the monks of the Order. But the work was crippled by paucity of funds. Swami Vivekananda quickly decided to sell out the newly purchased land for the monastery at Belur to raise adequate money for the work. When Sri Sarada Devi heard of that, she firmly objected: 'What is that, dear? How can you sell Belur Math? You have founded the Math consecrating it in my name and dedicating it to Sri Ramakrishna; where is your right to sell that? ... Will Belur Math vanish just after one work of service? How much more it has to do! The infinite spirit of Sri Ramakrishna will spread all around the world. This will continue for ages.'<sup>4</sup> Such was the farsightedness of a barely literate village woman who could rarely be seen in public. Commenting on the significance of the contribution of Sri Sarada Devi to the development of the Ramakrishna movement, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak wrote: 'This remarkable woman outlived her husband by 34 years. In the course of time, his [Sri Ramakrishna's] 12 young male disciples established her as the advisory head of an organization that became a monastic order devoted to social work. She performed her role with tact and wisdom, always remaining in the background.'<sup>5</sup>

### ***The Silent Revolutions***

With regard to some extremely prejudiced social norms and practices Sri Sarada Devi took revolutionary steps without any pomp and grandeur of a social reformer or a political leader. In

Jayrambati, a local Muslim mason named Amjad used to frequent Sri Sarada Devi's residence. He was also known to be a part-time robber. But Sri Sarada Devi always welcomed him with refreshments and he also reciprocated this sometimes by bringing some fruits for her. Obviously, she had to face huge protests from her family members for this. Once she made a remarkable comment in this regard: 'Even this Amjad is my son, exactly in the sense that Sarat (Swami Saradananda) is.' We must keep in mind that Swami Saradananda was one of the monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna and also the General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission at that time. She did not make any distinction between Amjad and Swami Saradananda so far as their ultimate human values were concerned. Not only that, she had to face sanctions of the village elders for repeatedly flouting caste restrictions. But that could not deter her in any way.<sup>6</sup>

On another occasion, Sri Sarada Devi asked one of her disciples to purchase some clothing for the children of her family during Durga Puja. It was the time of Swadeshi movement and going by the spirit of the day, the young man brought some Indian clothes which were inferior to the British clothes available in the market. Sri Sarada Devi told him: 'My child, they (the Western people) too are my children. I must accommodate everyone. Can I ever be exclusive? Buy the things they (the children) want' (132).

She proved her amazingly liberal outlook through her conduct. When Swami Vivekananda returned from the West, a host of American and European admirers accompanied him. Among them were Sister Nivedita, Mrs Ole Bull, and Sister Christine. Not only did she meet them, she dined with them, and even allowed them to sit on her bed! (132–3). This was quite a bold thing to do those days. Once she enjoyed the performance of the Easter music by Sister Nivedita and

another Western woman. Nivedita wrote regarding this incident that Sri Sarada Devi had an 'instant power to penetrate a new religious feeling or idea.'<sup>7</sup> It was nothing short of a revolution by the standards of those days.<sup>8</sup>

On several occasions, Sri Sarada Devi welcomed persons who were considered to be fallen in the eyes of the society and changed their mind with her motherly love. In one such incident, while Sri Sarada Devi was staying at Koalpara, near Jayrambati, an utterly disturbed sweeper woman, whose paramour had deserted her, sought her help. Sri Sarada Devi was deeply moved by the plea and summoned the man. Very soon by her gentle counselling and persuasion, she reconciled the couple (128). In another such incident, she spontaneously praised a person residing nearby her Baghbazar residence for attending his ailing concubine with great care (149).

But that does not mean she never protested against any social or political evil. There were many instances when Sri Sarada Devi had unequivocally expressed her dissent against such evils. She was quite aware of the exploitative nature of the colonial rule that was then imposed on India. Once two young pregnant women of her home district Bankura, were arrested on suspicion and made to walk a long distance to the police station. Hearing the news she vehemently protested against such inhumane cruelty. She also inspired some of her young disciples to start a weaving factory instead of merely shouting patriotic slogans (132). In another instance, while living in her Baghbazar residence, one evening, she saw a drunken husband beating his wife mercilessly in the nearby slum. Sri Sarada Devi, who was never heard to speak in a loud voice before, shouted from the first floor balcony, scolded the man, and silenced him.

She always encouraged girls to get properly educated and she wanted them to be

independent. One day, a devotee requested her to advise her daughter to get married. But she replied: 'Is it not a misery to remain in life-long slavery to another and always dance to his tune?' (125). On another occasion, when a mother of five daughters was expressing her concern over how to marry off the girls, Sri Sarada Devi suggested: 'Why do you worry about their marriage? If you cannot find suitable husbands for them, please send them to the Sister Nivedita Girls' School. They will be trained there. They will be very happy there' (226).

Sri Sarada Devi had encouraged one of her close associates and a nun, Gouri Ma, to set up a school for girls. The school was established in 1895 in Calcutta. It was named after Sri Sarada Devi herself as 'Sri Sri Saradeshwari Ashrama'. In 1898 another school for girls was founded at Baghbazar by Sister Nivedita. Sri Sarada Devi herself inaugurated the school. She always used to encourage her disciples to defer the age of marriage of their daughters and send them to these schools, let them be independent and decide themselves about their lives. She sent her own niece, Radhu, to a Christian missionary school to get an English education. One day, when someone told her that since Radhu had grown-up, she should not be allowed to go to the school anymore, she replied: 'She is not quite grown-up [at that time Radhu was fourteen years old]. Let her go to school. She can do immense good to others if she gets an education and learns some useful arts at the school. She has been married in a backward village. Through education she will not only improve herself but will be able to help others' (237). She also allowed one of her young women devotees to get herself trained in nursing and work in a hospital.

She was always pained to see the pathetic lives of widowed women. She herself continued to maintain her long hair, wore a red-bordered

white saris and golden bangles even after the demise of her husband. She also allowed herself to be photographed on several occasions. These were no doubt revolutionary actions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Bengal. Not only that, she repeatedly instructed her widow devotees to take adequate food and good care of their bodies. She used to encourage them to devote their lives to some creative and welfare activities and remain joyful. She wanted all her women disciples to conduct their lives in such a way that they need not depend on their husbands or fathers. She never discriminated among her women admirers on the grounds of their socio-economic status, moral, or ethical standards. Sri Sarada Devi also enjoyed viewing plays at public theatres in Calcutta, like 'Minerva' and 'Star' and actresses like Niradasundari, Tinkari, Tarasundari were all very close to her. We must remember that even persons like Vidyasagar, Bankim Chandra, and Shivanath Shastri used to distance themselves from these theatres because they considered the actresses as nothing more than morally degraded prostitutes.

One of the most striking features of Sri Sarada Devi's life was the unique intermingle of apparently opposite streams of lifestyle that had merged into her life in a creative equilibrium. Being a traditional household woman, the prime concern of her life should have been only to serve her family within the confinement of the residence. She did not denounce her household; in fact she used to perform all the daily household chores living amongst her brothers and their family members. Some of them were highly self-centred and some were plain lunatics. But amongst all this hue and cry of her domestic surroundings she continued to carry on her spiritual practices, initiating and guiding spiritual seekers, even ordaining some of them into monastic life. The last was highly unusual, as Sri




Sarada Devi was herself not a nun who had taken to monastic life formally or ritually. But her spiritual authority was beyond question. And this had led her to treat everyone equally irrespective of gender, class, caste, or creed.

### Empowerment from Within

With this very brief appraisal of the life and teachings of Sri Sarada Devi we can safely conclude that she was born at a time when women's rights and liberties were either grossly overlooked or were debated and settled by men in both public and domestic spheres. She was born in a financially challenged high caste family leading to tremendous economic hardships and social restrictions. She was born in a far-off village with hardly any influence of so-called urban 'enlightenment'. She had no chance to get formal education. She got married at a very early age. She had to spend almost thirty-four years—more than half of her lifespan—as a widow. But these challenging situations could not deter her from transforming herself into a fully composed, dignified, and independent personality; a loving mother and a caring homemaker; a gifted spiritual leader and a wise administrator; a silent crusader against social injustice and advocate of religious harmony; an icon of women's empowerment, and ultimately an ideal human being. Sri Sarada Devi had made this possible by cultivating her inherent qualities as a woman. Her discourse of empowerment was a discourse of spirituality and universal motherhood. In this sense it was different and also unique.

Much of the efforts that have been made in this country to emancipate women have been done in the socio-political, legal, and economic spheres. Most of these were aimed at facilitating external conditions for women to fulfil them. But Sri Sarada Devi has shown through her life and teachings that although external conditions

are necessary but ultimately, empowerment is about transforming the internal qualities and attitudes, without which nothing can be actually achieved. This point has been very eloquently expressed through an incident in her life. Just after the end of the World War I, while one of her devotees was explaining to her, the fourteen clauses of the Peace Treaty drafted by the US President Woodrow Wilson, Sri Sarada Devi remarked: 'Their protestation is only lip-deep (*mukhastha*). If it had come from their hearts (*antastha*), it would have meant a world of difference' (156). Likewise, Sri Sarada Devi's efforts for transforming herself and inspiring others to do so, was the story of a struggle which emerged from within, and that ultimately prevailed over the external barriers imposed on her. Here lies the *difference* of her story, and also its significance to the modern discourse on women's empowerment. 

### References

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# Swami Vivekananda's Unpublished Transcreation of 'A Hindu Song of Praise'

Vandana Jani

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S transcreation of Sri Ramakrishna's favourite song, '*Jo kuch hai so tu hi hai*, all that exists art thou', in Swami Vivekananda's own hand, has been recently discovered.

Sri Ramakrishna would say to Narendranath Datta, the pre-monastic name of Swami Vivekananda: 'And [sing] that one—"All that exists art Thou."' <sup>1</sup> Echoing the love of Sri Ramakrishna for the song, Swami Saradananda says: 'He would not be completely satisfied until he had heard Narendra sing "All that exists art Thou"' <sup>2</sup> Truly, this favourite song of Sri Ramakrishna carries the liquid lyrical form of his mystic experiences.

In May 2012, during my ongoing research on Swami Saradananda in the US, I came across a collection of lecture notes and papers of Ms Thursby, a disciple of Swami Vivekananda. Amidst her papers, I found a handwritten note entitled 'A Hindu Song of Praise'. <sup>3</sup> Written in English, in the 'ink of the period,' it was in a poetic format. Quickly, it dawned on me that it was a free translation of the same favourite song 'All that exists art Thou'. The paper had parched with age, and was without a date or a signature, but it had precious words of that song on it! Silent and motionless, I sat there staring at it. Then, intuitively, I touched the paper with reverence, and sensed that I was holding a sacred artefact! <sup>4</sup>

A thought crossed my mind: 'Did Swami Vivekananda write on this page? Did he want to explain the meaning of his favourite song to

his Western disciple(s)?' One of the Western disciples, Mrs Hansborough, has reminisced that Swamiji would sing Bengali songs or chant Sanskrit verses and 'explain them ... in a much more personal way than from the platform.' <sup>5</sup> The thrill to uncover the truth about the song was boundless.

One way to know the truth was to compare the handwriting on the paper with other known handwritten documents of Swamiji. To be certain, I consulted a well-known local professional handwriting examiner, Karl Schaffenberg. Upon a critical examination of Swamiji's handwriting samples with his professional expertise, Schaffenberg certified: 'According to the principles and techniques of forensic handwriting comparison and identification and based on the available [resources], my conclusion is: The handwriting appearing on the subject—"Handwritten Document (A Hindu Song of Praise)"—can be identified as being by the hand of Vivekananda.' <sup>6</sup>

My joy knew no bounds. I was viewing more than just words. The parched paper turned vibrant with Swamiji's presence. It brought in the atmosphere of Sri Ramakrishna's room, young Naren and others being with the Master, their conversations, their love, and the divine bliss flowing incessantly from Sri Ramakrishna to all. Truly, 'Great prophets speak not only through their writings but also through the artefacts which preserve their memories.' <sup>7</sup>

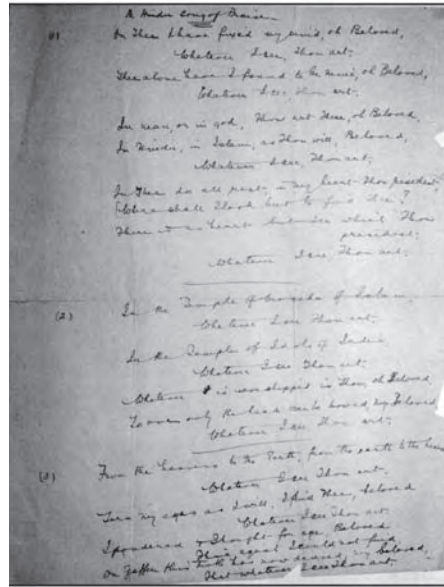
Drifted by Swamiji's thoughts, I was curious to know when Swamiji wrote this song.

Relevant gleanings indicated that during the summer of 1894, Swamiji taught at the Greenacre Conference, Eliot, Maine, and then in New York for the major part of late 1894 to early 1896.<sup>8</sup> Later, in his second visit to the US, Swamiji spent a very short time in New York city for two weeks in November 1899 and a few days in June to July of 1900. Therefore, it could only be during 1894–6 when Ms Thursby was in direct contact with Swamiji and attended many of his classes regularly.<sup>9</sup> Assimilating these facts and schedule of events, I could infer that the manuscript is from the period 1894–6!

This finding places the period of the Swamiji's composition even earlier than the publication of any other translation of this song. The history of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* has been traced by Swami Chetanananda.<sup>10</sup> A study of its substantive chronology indicates that none of the publications related to *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* came out before 1896. Thus, the song carries the untainted flavour of freshness and purity. Moreover, this rendering by Swamiji is very special and sacred because it elegantly presents Swamiji's own thoughts, inner feelings, direct experience, and the message of practical Vedanta!

One could hear in the pages of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Narendra singing this song 'All that exists art Thou' for Sri Ramakrishna on 24 October 1885 and 22 April 1886.<sup>11</sup> Trailoky-anath Sanyal, a professor of music at the Brahmo Samaj, had also sung this song to Sri Ramakrishna on 13 June 1885 (794).

When Narendra used to sing this song for



Facsimile of The Transcreation by Swamiji

Sri Ramakrishna in the presence of other devotees, they would listen to it with utmost focus and absorption. In the words of Sri Ramakrishna: 'Like a cobra, quiet before the charmer' (969). Narendra himself said to M.: 'Perhaps you remember that he [Master] said to me, "When you sing, He who dwells here (touching his heart), like a snake, hisses as it were, and then, spreading His hood, quietly holds Himself steady and listens to your music"' (986).

The time when Sri Ramakrishna was diagnosed with throat cancer, all the young boys had redoubled their efforts to nurse him and stayed near their Master day and night. Narendra, understanding the terminal nature of Sri Ramakrishna's illness and realising that the beloved teacher would not live long, begged his Master to bless him to remain absorbed in samadhi continually for three or four days. Sri Ramakrishna rebuked him: 'You are a very small-minded person. There is a state higher even than that. "All that exists art Thou"—it is you who sing that song' (935–6). Thus, even in the feeblest state, Sri Ramakrishna chose this song and through its words instilled vital concepts in his spiritual heir!

Swamiji has aptly titled his rendering as 'A Hindu Song of Praise'. The use of the word 'Hindu' implies that his listeners were Western students and the term 'Song of Praise' is a culture-specific term pervasively used for psalms, hymns, and hamds. The last verse of the song carries 'Zaffer' as the name of the poet, though with varied but accepted spellings in various translations. Furthermore, the identity of the poet is

differently presented in different music books.<sup>12</sup> It is known that ‘Zafar’ was the pen name of the last Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar who was a great Sufi poet.

Searching through the available books containing collections of Zafar’s poetry, I could not find this song listed. However, the possibility cannot be denied that it might be one of the many songs that got destroyed during the Rebellion of 1857 in India, but the song has continued to float over the land, touching the hearts of many generations. I believe that Narendra may have learned this song from his Mohammedan music teacher Ustad Ahmad Khan, who taught him many Urdu, Hindi, and Persian devotional songs.<sup>13</sup> Maybe it was Narendra who introduced the song to the Brahmos.

A salient feature that merits attention is that Swamiji has written an exceptional song in English, based on Zafar’s lyrics in Urdu, without losing the poetic format, intent, style, and context. Swamiji’s rendering depicts the ‘oneness of existence’, expressed by the composer ‘Zaffer’ and experienced by Sri Ramakrishna and himself. Swamiji is ‘the pioneer of saint-poetry which is characterized by spirituality and mysticism.’<sup>14</sup> ‘A saint is sometimes an artist as much,’<sup>15</sup> and Swamiji’s poems do paint a ‘sublime poetic art.’<sup>16</sup> This manuscript is a lyrical testimony to Swamiji’s poetic talent, intellectual prowess, and spiritual sensitivity.

On 17 February 1896, from New York Swamiji wrote to Alasinga Perumal in India: ‘The dry, abstract Advaita must become living—*poetic*—in everyday life ... and all this must be put in a form so that a child may grasp it. That is my life’s work.’<sup>17</sup>

But to perform that life’s work was not easy. In the same letter, Swamiji wrote: ‘Just as I am writing to you, every one of my bones is paining after last afternoon’s long Sunday public lecture. ... It is hard work, my boy, hard work! To keep one’s self steady in the midst of this whirl

of Kama-Kanchana (lust and gold) and hold on to one’s own ideals, until disciples are molded to conceive of the ideas of realisation and perfect renunciation, is indeed a difficult work, my boy’ (ibid.).

Swamiji’s immense faith in Vedanta becomes tangible as he says, ‘Whatever I see, Thou art.’ His goal was to show the *oneness* and *unity* in all *diversity*. He felt *divinity* vibrating in all that existed. His sacred means to achieve these were renunciation and service. For him, renunciation or detachment was nothing but to have an attachment to the ideal of the infinite love for the Beloved.

It is with great reverence that I have shared ‘A Hindu Song of Praise—Whatever I see Thou Art’ by Swamiji’s own hand. Infused with his love for his Master, the solemnity of the song uplifts one towards the spiritual plane. Each verse unfolds his Master’s majestic message of Oneness:

(1) On Thee I have fixed my mind,  
oh Beloved,  
Whatever I see, Thou art.

[The spontaneously added phrase ‘oh Beloved’ in every stanza personifies the Infinite as mirrored in his Master. Swamiji’s subtle observations and experiences of the world revealed to him, ‘the face of the Truth—the Ultimate Reality’. Then only could he say:]

Thee alone have I found to be mine, oh Beloved,  
Whatever I see, Thou art.

[At the World Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893, Swamiji delivered his profound message of ‘Harmony of all Religions’ with powerful conviction. It silently throbs in the tunes of these lines:]


In man, or in god, Thou art there, oh Beloved,  
In Hindu, in Islam, as Thou wilt, Beloved,  
Whatever I see, Thou art.  
In Thee do all rest, in our heart thou residest,  
[Where shall I look but to find Thee?]  
There is no heart but o’er which Thou presidest,  
Whatever I see, Thou art.



(2) In the Temple of Masiha of Islam,  
 Whatever I see Thou art.  
 In the Temple of idols of India,  
 Whatever I see, Thou art.  
 Whatever is worshipped is Thou, Oh Beloved,  
 To one only the head can be bowed,  
     my Beloved,  
 Whatever I see, Thou art.

(3) From the heavens to the earth,  
     from the earth to the heavens,  
 Whatever I see, Thou art.  
 Turn my eyes as I will, I find Thee, Beloved,  
 Whatever I see, Thou art.  
 I pondered and thought for aye, Beloved,  
 Thine equal I could not find  
 On Zaffer this truth has now dawned,  
     my Beloved,  
 That whatever I see Thou art.

Thus, he sees that the Beloved who resides in his own heart is also present in the whole universe: 'From the heavens to the earth, from the earth to the heavens', he was there worshipping him, serving him.

Holding Swamiji's handwritten words in my hands, I felt that while writing this, his mind must have been transported to that day, when the Master, after listening to the song had said: "Thou hast entered every heart", he said by a sign: "God dwells in everybody's heart. He is the Inner Guide."<sup>18</sup> Keeping that 'Inner Guide' always in his bosom, Swamiji has thus shared with all, the treasure of his Beloved. 

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4. This research would not have been possible without the help of many kind-hearted people. My sincere thanks to Sangeeta Mehta for her valuable contribution for the content and style, Debaprasad Saha for translating the needed Bengali passages into English, Adnan Khan through Mihir Shah and Mehfuza Mukadam for going through many Urdu titles of Bahadur Shah Zafar's poems from his available books, Ronak Parikh for important suggestions in editing, and Neirah Bhargava for her precise photography.
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# Swami Vivekananda and Others in Kesari and Mahratta Newspapers

Dr Suruchi Pande

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ARRIVED in Maharashtra in April 1892. His meeting with Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856–1920) in September 1892, his stay at Vinchurkar Wada, his scholarly lecture at Deccan Club in Hirabag area in Pune, and his stay at Mahabaleshwar with Moropant Joshi and his family have become a source of inspiration and pride to all Marathi speaking people. Wherever Swami Vivekananda went, people were impressed by his personality, oratory, insight, and erudition. Thus, through Swami Vivekananda, the people of Maharashtra were introduced to Sri Ramakrishna.

Swami Vivekananda was certainly aware of the progressive educational and social atmosphere in Maharashtra. In the words of Lokamanya Tilak: “The Swami happened to express a strong hope that as the women in the Maharashtra were not handicapped by the *purdah* system, it was probable that some of the widows in the higher classes would devote their lives to the spread of spirituality and religion alone like the old *yogis* of the Buddhist period.”<sup>1</sup> Later, other disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Shivananda, Swami Abhedananda, Swami Vijnanananda, and Gauri Ma visited Maharashtra.

There was a feeling of appreciation for Marathi people and their history in Bengal. Bengalis were attracted to the freedom movement under the leadership of Lokamanya Tilak. The contribution of a Marathi author and a journalist named Sakharan Ganesh Deuskar (1869–1912)—who was the editor of *Hitavadi* during 1905–7 in Bengal—is important to remember. He was a follower of Lokamanya Tilak. He wrote biographies of national heroes based on historical documents in wonderful Bengali. His books titled *Bajirao* (1899), *Jhansir Rajkumar* (1901), *Mahamati Ranade* (1901), *Shivajir Mahattva* (1903), *Desher Katha* (1904), *Krishaker Sarvanasha* (1904), *Shivaji* (1906), and *Tilaker Mokaddama O Sankshipta Charitra* (1908) are important.

Moropant Joshi with Family



Remarkable literature was written on Sri Ramakrishna from 1899 to 1925. In the history of Marathi literature the period from 1875 to 1920 is described as revolutionary. New and innovative social, political, religious, and economic thoughts were getting ingrained in society. The period from 1900 to 1910 is also considered to be important. This decade carried the influence of national awakening that prominently marked the end of the twentieth century.

A review of literature on Sri Ramakrishna from 1899 to 1925 will be interesting because we would be studying various newspaper reports on Swami Vivekananda and others related to him in the *Kesari* and *Mahratta* newspapers covering the period from 1892 to 1920.

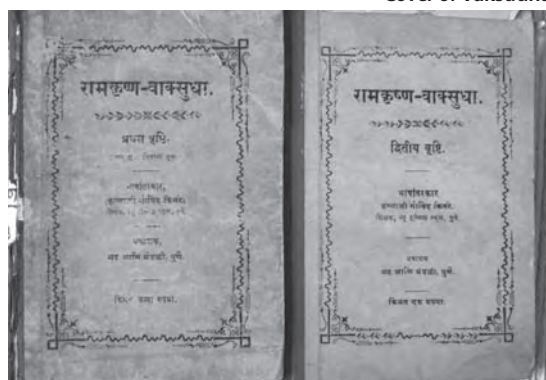
Krishnaji Narayan Athalye (1852–1926) was the well-known author and editor of *Kerala Kokila* magazine, which he started in 1886. Athalye was born in Satara district of Maharashtra. His father was an austere Brahmin and well versed in the scriptures. Krishnaji received the knowledge of *Sambhitas*, *Shiksha*, *Jyotisha*, and *Chhandas* from his learned father. Later, he also gained some knowledge of English. He worked as a teacher for a few years but he joined the J J School of Arts where he mastered the art of oil painting. Afterwards he settled in Cochin and started *Kerala Kokila*. Then it was a popular magazine, which published interesting columns and book reviews. It was in circulation for twenty-five years. Krishnaji was a talented writer and was given the title *Maharashtra Bhasha Chitra Mayura*, the peacock of Maharashtra literature, by the then pontiff of the Shringeri Shankaracharya Math.

Krishnaji wrote a series based on the book *Ramakrishna: His Life and Sayings* authored by Prof. F Max Muller (1898). It was published from March 1899 in *Kerala Kokila*. Later it was published as a book titled *Sulabha Vedanta* in 1900. In the foreword to this book Krishnaji has explained the sources and he mentions a book by a renowned scholar 'Pandit Moksha Mullar'. He has also referred to the issues of *Brahmavadin*, *Prabuddha Bharata*, and a few Bengali newspapers. *Sulabha Vedanta* consists of three hundred and sixty sayings of Sri Ramakrishna. This book was quite popular among Marathi readers. Its fourth edition was published in 1969. Krishnaji was known for his frank and explicit

style of writing. He was concerned with the downfall of India and expressed his thoughts in a fiery language. He was a pioneer in spreading the thoughts of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda in Maharashtra.

Krishnaji Govinda Kinare was an idealistic and devoted teacher at the New English School, Pune. He has greatly contributed to Marathi literature by translating the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* written in Bengali by Mahendranath Gupta. Kinare has written a unique foreword to the first part of the translation titled *Ramakrishna Vaksudha* (1912). The author says that he was initially requested to write a series of spiritual articles for a magazine named *Chitramaya Jagat*. He had agreed to write but had no particular theme in his mind. Coincidentally one of his friends suggested him to translate the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. Thus the series started in *Chitramaya Jagat*. Soon it became popular and the author received many demands from the readers to publish it as a book. The translation was not yet completed and so only the first part was published, which won a cash prize by the Deccan Vernacular Translation Society. The second part was published in 1915. The forewords of both the parts clearly show that Kinare was deeply influenced by the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. He expresses his indebtedness to Mahendranath Gupta in a moving language.

Cover of Vaksudha

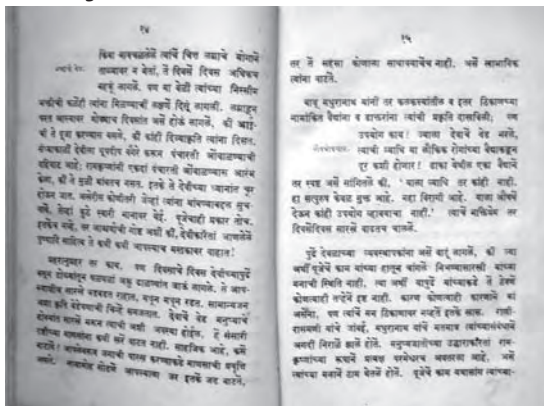




He has briefly reviewed the failures of India and has stressed the relevance of the Vedantic teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. In his translation, he received literary help from Parasharam Lakshman Vaidya and also from the poet Dattatraya Ananta Apte alias 'Ananta Tanaya' who translated original Bengali songs into Marathi. He also received valuable suggestions from Narayana Krishna Gogate. In his other book, *Shri Ramakrishna Kathamala* (1924), the author has presented the parables of Sri Ramakrishna with some commentary at the end of each parable, where he has quoted some moral sayings or the teachings of popular Marathi saints.

For the first time a compilation of the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna was published in Marathi by K R Mitra in 1913. His book was titled *Sri Ramakrishnanchi Bodha Vachane*. A similar book was written in 1925 by P N Misal. An extremely popular book till date which beautifully narrates the life of Sri Ramakrishna was authored by N R Paranjape, based on *Sri Ramakrishna Leelaprasanga*. The first part was published in 1923 and second in 1925. Nagesha Vasudev Gunaji wrote the life of Sri Ramakrishna in 1913, which was based on the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. The second book by the same author was based on the sayings of Sri Ramakrishna. Its third edition was published in 1928. It consists

Inside Page from Vaksudha

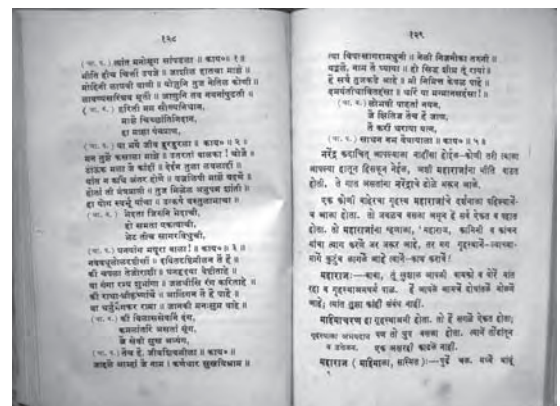


of six hundred and forty two sayings. In the fore-words to both these books Gunaji has referred to these books: *Ramakrishna: His Life and Sayings* by Prof. Max Muller, *Ramakrishna Bodhamrita* published in *Brahmavadin*, based on the book *Leaves from the Gospel of Ramakrishna*, and a Hindi book written by Swami Vijnanananda titled *Sri Ramakrishna Dev ka Sankshipta Jivan Charitra aur Upadesh* (1904). He also mentions *Sulabha Vedanta* (1900) and the reminiscences of Sri Ramakrishna penned by Pandit Shivanath Shastri in *Modern Review* (November 1910).

At the beginning of both of the books by Gunaji, we find a beautiful Marathi poem 'Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa Stotra' composed by Vitthal Krishna Kamat. Vitthal Sitaram Gurjar translated Bengali songs into Marathi for Gunaji's book. During this period, Ananda Mohan Choudhuri of Nagpur published a small book on the life of Sri Ramakrishna.

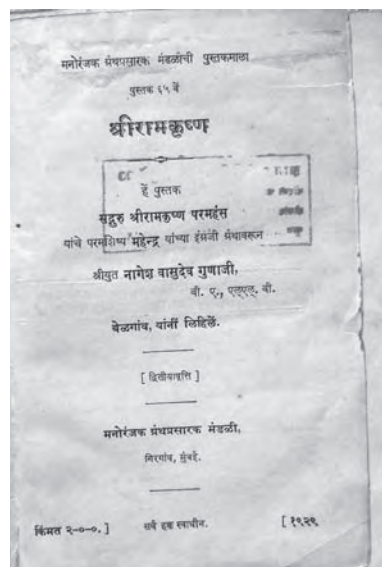
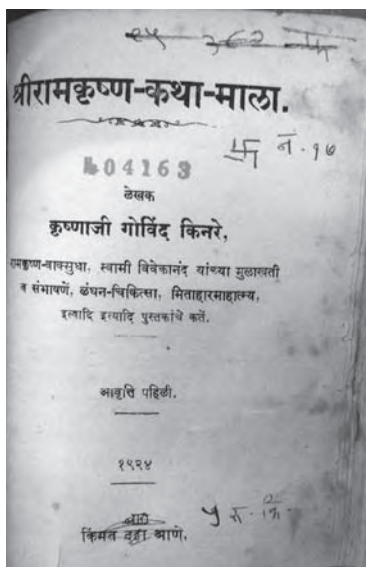
A well-known saint of Maharashtra, Dasaganu Maharaj (1868–1962) composed a poem on Sri Ramakrishna. Dasaganu Maharaj was known as *Adhunik Mahipati*, the modern king. He wrote poems based on historical documents describing the holy lives of various saints, *Ovibaddha Charitra*, and biographies of saints. The number of his poetic compositions is more than two lakh.

Poem from Vaksudha





Some books on Sri Ramakrishna that were published between 1899 and 1925 are: *Sulabha Vedanta* by K N Athalye, *Ramakrishna Vaksudha* and *Shri Ramakrishna Kathamala* by K G Kinare, *Shri Ramakrishnanchi Bodhavachane* by K R Mitra, *Shriramakrishna* and *Sri Ramakrishnanchi Bodha Vachane* by N V Gunaji, *Sri Ramakrishna Charitra* by N R Paranjape, *Ramakrishna Bodhamruta* by P N Misal, *Sri Ramakrishnanche Charitra* by Ananda Mohan Choudhuri.



Front Pages of Sri Ramakrishna Kathamala and Sri Ramakrishna

### Sri Ramakrishna in Marathi Magazines

In 1924, Parashuram Sadashiv Desai started a magazine named *Ramakrishna Niketan* from Malvan in western Maharashtra, which was printed in Ratnagiri. This magazine aimed to promulgate the teachings of Swami Vivekananda. It is significant to note that the publisher had decided not to raise funds through advertisements. Initially the motto of the magazine was 'Om Namō Bhagavate Ramakrishnaya; Om, salutations to Sri Ramakrishna'. From the fourth issue it was changed to 'Uttishthata Jagrata Prapya Varannibodhata; Arise, awake, approach the great and learn'. The magazine was run for fourteen years till 1940.

This article is an introduction to a series of articles that will review the Marathi newspaper reports on Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, and some other related people between 1892 and 1920. On 12 and 14 November 1910, the newspaper *Jnana Prakash* published the dialogue between Swami Vivekananda and Sarat Chandra Chakravarty that took place in 1898. The news reports are interesting and informative.

The *Kesari* was a Marathi newspaper and the *Mahratta* was an English newspaper. The editors of *Kesari* of the period we are considering were: Bal Gangadhar Tilak from 25 October 1887 to 21 July 1897 and 11 July 1899 to 28 July 1908; Narasimha Chintaman Kelkar from 28 July 1897 to 27 June 1899, 11 January 1910 to 4 March 1918, and 22 June 1920 to 27 December 1927; Krishnaji Prabhakar Khadilkar from 28 July 1908 to 4 January 1910 and 11 March 1918 to 15 June 1920.

These news reports contain references to some prominent personalities of that time that encouraged the mission of Swami Vivekananda and contributed to the spreading the message of Sri Ramakrishna. I am thankful to the 'Kesari Wada Library and the Newspaper Archives', Pune, for the generous help in my reference work. It was a memorable experience to go through the yellow, brittle pages of newspapers, which reflected the great history and thought revolution of pre-independence era.

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# The Higgs Boson and the Human Mind

Dr Saibal Gupta

THE JOURNEY OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE is a fascinating saga in every age, whether it is the discovery of fire, discovery of the wheel, marvels of modern science, or the discovery of mind. Such discoveries, whether by accident or by rigorous search, have a deep impact on the human mind and enhance human awareness leading to drastically changed societies and lives. Sometimes it brings destruction on a massive scale or reconstruction in a new direction and sometimes both. This is the romance of search. The players in this game devote a lifetime to one particular area of knowledge and few win fame while others may miss by a whisker but provide the clues to the winner. In ancient India the search for knowledge was intense but with that was the realisation that knowledge was not a property because all new knowledge developed on the basis of the existing knowledge in society. That is not the case in the modern world because since the industrial revolution most discoveries have progressively proved to be of material benefit both to the discoverer and his country. This has accelerated scientific research not only in applied research but also in fundamental research. On the flip side it has brought competition, fragmentation, conflict, greed, and unhappiness. This essay is a part of that story.

Albert Einstein proposed mass–energy equivalence in 1905 in one of his papers entitled ‘Does the inertia of an object depend upon its energy-content?’<sup>1</sup> a part of his Special Theory of Relativity. The equivalence is described by the famous equation ‘ $E=mc^2$ ’. Einstein himself spoke

about this equation in the film *Atomic Physics* in 1945:

It followed from the special theory of relativity that mass and energy are both but different manifestations of the same thing—a somewhat unfamiliar conception for the average mind. Furthermore, the equation  $E = mc^2$ , in which energy is put equal to mass, multiplied by the square of the velocity of light, showed that very small amounts of mass may be converted into a very large amount of energy and vice versa. The mass and energy were in fact equivalent, according to the formula mentioned above.

This led to the discovery of the atom bomb though he was not a part of that project and despised it afterwards.

While the vicious application of this equation came to light, there was no clue in classical physics of how this transformation took place in nature. Two great theories of physics developed at the beginning of the twentieth century one after another. The first was a theory of space, time, and motion, called Relativity. The second was a theory of the nature of matter and of the forces that act upon it that had its origin in Max Planck’s observation that electromagnetic radiation is emitted in discrete packets or quanta and by the 1920s this ‘quantum theory’ was elaborated into a general quantum mechanics (QM). It was also realised that in it lay the fundamental mystery of the creation of matter and the universe of our experience but that was yet far away. What came about immediately was a collision of the two theories in the understanding of reality. Here I

quote Paul Davies in his introduction to a book written by Heisenberg:

The Copenhagen interpretation of quantum mechanics, which Heisenberg here expounds so lucidly, rejects the objective reality of the quantum microworld. It denies that, say, an electron has a well-defined position *and* a well-defined momentum in the absence of an actual observation of either its position or its momentum (and both cannot yield sharp values simultaneously). Thus an electron or an atom cannot be regarded as a little *thing* in the same sense that a billiard ball is a thing. One cannot meaningfully talk about what an electron is doing between observations because it is the observations alone that create the reality of electron. ... This unpredictability of quantum systems does not imply anarchy, however. Quantum mechanics still enables the relative *probabilities* of the alternatives to be specified precisely. Thus quantum mechanics is a statistical theory. It can make definite predictions about ensembles of identical systems, but it can generally tell us nothing definite about an individual system. Where it differs from other statistical theories ... is that the chance element is *inherent* in the nature of the quantum system and not merely imposed by our limited grasp of all variables that affect the system.<sup>2</sup>

The classical physicists found it difficult to understand in the beginning. Even Einstein expressed doubts in a letter written to Max Born dated 4 December 1926: 'Quantum mechanics is very impressive. But an inner voice tells me that it is not yet the real thing. The theory produces a good deal but hardly brings us closer to the secret of the Old One. I am at all events convinced that *He* [God] does not play dice.'<sup>3</sup> When Einstein was no more, Oppenheimer wrote in an article that his opposition to QM put physics behind by many years. There were also cryptic remarks from Max Born and Stephen Hawking. But there was no remark from Niels Bohr who laid

the foundation of QM along with scientists like Schrödinger, Pauli, Heisenberg, and others, and fought battles with Einstein with great mutual respect till Einstein retired. But Einstein might not have been totally wrong. New physics to link the two theories is proving essential to understand many things in the universe. Doubts also exist whether material research alone can reveal the secret of the reality of the universe without knowing about the human being, the generating and ultimate measuring instrument of research and a product of the evolving universe.

### QM and the Universe

There was tremendous progress in QM and the ground of activity was progressively in the mystery of the microcosm with particle physics, forces, fields, and new mathematics. The spin-offs from material life in all societies in a short time were mind-boggling. In the beginning of the twentieth century most of the technological fruits of QM were unimaginable. Communication technology was unheard of and even their possibility was doubted. Further technological developments of particle physics are seen.

Within a short time the human being has extended its mind trying to understand the secrets behind creation in the physical world: how it started, developed, and diversified, and its future. The human being is also delving into itself to learn how and why one thinks and discovers, what are the processes by which the brain and mind works. These two areas—the cosmos and consciousness—are the targets today that humans must understand.

QM goes to the origin of the universe. In the words of Steven Weinberg, a Nobel laureate theoretical physicist: 'Fortunately, it is not necessary to come to a definite decision about the large-scale geometry of the universe in order to draw conclusions about its beginning. The

reason is that the universe has a sort of horizon, and this horizon shrinks rapidly as we look back toward the beginning.<sup>4</sup> This background horizon was predicted in the late 1940s when ‘a “big bang” cosmological theory was being explored by George Gamow and his colleagues Ralph A. Alpher and Robert Herman. They assumed that the universe started as pure neutrons, and that the neutrons then began to convert to protons through the familiar radioactive decay process in which a neutron spontaneously turns into a proton, an electron, and an antineutrino’ (123–4).

Alpher and Herman predicted the existence of a radiation background left over from the early universe, with a present temperature of five degrees Kelvin. The studies of nucleosynthesis had not progressed at the time and so there were gaps and mistakes in the theory on which many people worked. Ultimately a uniform cosmic microwave background with a temperature of three degrees Kelvin was actually measured in 1965 by Penzias and Wilson and it was the leftover from the ‘big bang’. Calculations of general theory of relativity also showed a singularity of infinite density, space-time curvature, and zero volume at the origin of universe and the ‘big bang’ origin of the universe has come to be accepted and called the standard model of cosmology. The competing theory of a ‘steady state universe’ by Fred Hoyle and others has gradually receded.

### **QM and Time**

Another thing is supposed to happen in this singularity, *time stops*. There is apparently nowhere to go beyond this. But that certainty is dissolving in recent years. The expanding universe starts contracting after some time by the laws of General Relativity and Stephen Hawking, at one point thought that time would then reverse and biological life will not be possible. He retracted this idea later. He also discussed the ancient

cosmogonists in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim religious traditions in a humorous manner.<sup>5</sup>

Ancient Indian cosmology as found in the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Bhagavata, and other Puranas describe the origin of universe from an indefinable initial state by division and expansion. At some stage of expansion, contraction starts by curling at the edges and the universe dissolves gradually but its essential elements remain to recreate that initial state to start another cycle. Time is therefore eternal and unidirectional. Each such cycle is called a *kalpa* in cosmic time. Consciousness was believed to be inherent in the universe and in ‘the beginning, this (universe) was but the self (Viraj) of a human form.’<sup>6</sup> The initial state metamorphoses into the different qualities of the universe and ultimately to life and human beings. These ideas are expressed through metaphors and similes drawn from the known world and described as divine play but its essentials are similar to those revealed to scientists today. It has to be understood that this cannot be attributed to a particular religion, but this discovery belongs to an ancient tradition and its truth stands, although divinity does not agree with many. It exists as the most important knowledge base of humanity.

In a seminar with Stephen Hawking, a physicist, Nancy Cartwright, a philosopher, and Abner Shimony, a physicist and philosopher, the mathematical physicist Roger Penrose talked about a possible hypothesis of the universe similar to this ancient knowledge based on modern science, where the universe does not collapse like a balloon but proceeds from a Big Bang to a big crunch or contraction, followed by the re-creation of the initial singularity of another Big Bang.<sup>7</sup> He describes an open and a closed model of this regeneration of a new universe. This happens with shifting and coalescence of high energies to the centre according to the



mathematics of QM as it happens in the centre of a black hole. A large number of black holes can also coalesce. Time still remains unidirectional and eternal.

There are more mysteries with time. Non-locality of events as shown by Einstein's thought experiment of Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen (EPR) paradox gave rise to serious questions about observership. In this paradox, if a particle pair gets separated and travel in opposite directions in space they will carry the same spin and momentum and a measurement performed in one place in space on one member of the pair could instantaneously influence the other member in a very specific way at a great distance across space although there is no question of any communication from one to the other. This thought experiment published in 1935 was experimentally verified, with a few objections, in 1981 by Alain Aspect using photon pairs when Einstein was no more.<sup>8</sup> This phenomenon is called 'quantum entanglement'. What happens in space can also happen in time. Penrose wrote in 1994: 'There are reasons for being suspicious of our physical notions of time, not just in relation to consciousness, but in relation to physics itself, when quantum non-locality and counterfactuality is involved. ... My own inclinations are to try to hang on to both—quantum realism *and* the spirit of the relativistic space-time view. But to do so will require a fundamental change in our present way of representing physical reality.'<sup>9</sup> The story of the universe may be based on cosmic time that unites QM and relativity with a flexibility of application to different states. It will have a profound effect on our mind and perception of events.

### ***The Higgs Boson***

With most physicists accepting the standard model, the problem remained of how in the

beginning in a state of infinite temperature, density, and rapid inflation, mass appeared. Without mass there will be no gravity and space will not expand. In 1964 a Scottish theoretical physicist, Peter Higgs postulated a theoretical field of energy that permeates the universe that has since been known as the Higgs Field. Higgs suggested the field as a possible explanation for how the fundamental particles of the universe came to have mass, because in the 1960s the standard model of quantum physics could not actually explain the reason for mass itself. Higgs proposed that this scalar field existed throughout space and that particles gained their mass by interacting with it. Though there was initially no experimental confirmation for the theory, over time it came to be seen as the only explanation for mass that was widely viewed as consistent with the rest of the standard model. As strange as it may seem, the Higgs mechanism was generally accepted widely among physicists, along with the rest of the standard model. One consequence of the theory was that the Higgs field could manifest as a particle, much in the way that other fields in quantum physics manifest as particles. This particle is called the Higgs boson. Its presence has finally been proved on 14 March 2013 by the Large Hadron Collider of the European Organisation for Nuclear Research, CERN, where it has been produced by colliding protons at high velocity close to the speed of light. It has been colloquially called 'God Particle', a term not liked by scientists and used in the titles of books written by Dr Leon Lederman, Nobel laureate experimental physicist.

In our universe there are only two types of subatomic particles: bosons and fermions. Since more than one boson with the same energy can occupy the same place in space, bosons are often force carrier particles. They were named 'bosons' by Paul Dirac to commemorate the name

of Dr Satyendra Nath Bose as these obey Bose-Einstein Statistics and Bose Condensation. The Bosons have integer spin in the same manner as was initially proposed by Dr Bose. Fermions are matter particles and obey Fermi-Dirac statistics. This is in accordance with the spin-statistics theorem, which states that in any reasonable relativistic quantum field theory, particles with integer spin are bosons, while particles with half-integer spin are fermions. Two Fermions cannot exist in the same quantum state as they obey Pauli's Exclusion Principle. Fermions are the skeletal scaffolding of the cosmos; bosons are what bind it together.

According to the standard model all mass consists of fermions. Whether the fermions combine to form a table, a star, a human body, a flower or do not combine at all depend on the fundamental forces—the electromagnetic, the gravitational, the weak, and the strong forces. According to the standard model all force is mediated by the exchange of gauge bosons. On these elements the universe develops. So how does Higgs boson solve the riddle of the mass in the early expansion of the universe?

### **Spontaneous Symmetry Breaking**

It is impossible in an article like this to intelligibly follow a fifty-year search in theoretical particle physics of a large number of research scientists across the globe to find a solution to one problem. There is a huge gap between discovering and understanding but the latter is as important and exciting as the former.

In the standard model, fundamental forces arise from laws of nature called symmetries and are transmitted by means of particles known as gauge bosons. The symmetry governing the weak force is expected to lead to the weak force having massless gauge bosons, but experiments actually showed it having very massive and short-ranging

gauge bosons. Their short range, a result of their mass, makes structures like atoms and stars possible, but explaining their unexpected mass posed an exceedingly difficult problem. These gauge bosons are now called W and Z bosons, parts of the Higgs Field. Why some fundamental particles have mass when the symmetries controlling their interactions should require them to be massless, and—linked to this—why the weak force has a much shorter range than the electromagnetic force? The symmetry in particle physics is not the same as in our everyday world but surprisingly very similar. Some symmetry laws in particle physics only fully apply under specific conditions. This means that circumstances could exist, in theory, where a given symmetry might not be obeyed. The Higgs mechanism is an explanation devised in 1964 of why and how gauge bosons for an interaction could be massive despite their governing symmetry, if the conditions for the symmetry were 'broken' by an unusual type of field. Since a field is also a particle, a big fat Higgs Boson was postulated that undergoes spontaneous symmetry breaking and yields two fat gauge bosons W and Z of the weak force. The remaining electrically neutral component (quarks) separately couples to fermions via Yukawa couplings, causing these to acquire mass.

The standard model states that a scalar field, Higgs field, exists throughout space which breaks certain symmetry laws of the electro-weak interaction. The field's existence triggers the Higgs mechanism. Some years after the original theory, scientists realised that the same field would also explain, in a different way, why other fundamental constituents of matter, including electrons and quarks have mass. The existence of the Higgs Boson has been experimentally proven. However, every discovery in science solving a problem throws up more problems to solve. One such is why Higgs boson undergoes spontaneous

symmetry breakdown and it has been suggested that it happens due to energy of vacuum in universe. There are other questions that there may be more such fields in the universe in different energy levels and the presence of dark matter throughout the universe may be related. There is also the possibility of speeds faster than light.

Symmetry breaking in particle physics has parallels in other areas of evolution. There is no growth without breaking established symmetry evolution. An example is the last Ice Age that completely changed the established biosphere on earth of giant reptiles and began the evolution of the human being. It can happen also in the holistic life of a human being. One probable example that comes foremost to my mind is the Last Supper of Jesus Christ. In this great divine play Jesus told that Judas would be his betrayer and that Peter would reject him three times before the cock crows, shocking his disciples. The field built so far rose to a new dimension to establish divinity on earth. Every time I read or picture the Passion of Christ I am deeply moved by this grand event in the secret of creation and I do not have to be a Christian to feel that. There are similar examples, more or less vivid, in most religions and folklore. It is tragic that instead of realising or developing them, most followers know only their trivial derivatives. When would mankind learn not to divide its great assets in this universe and stop fighting over the pieces? This is caused by the ego and greed of human beings. This greed will be responsible for human downfall unless consciously curbed in every aspect of human knowledge and activity. ☯

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# In Search of Possible Physical Laws in Spirituality

Gopal C Bhar

(Continued from the previous issue)

## Objectivity to Subjectivity

IT IS SAID THAT THE SPIRITUAL ENERGY is always flowing in nature as manifested through its harmony, inspiration, and creation, perceived through our holistic heart and not through our logical brain. Brain and heart are the two knowledge organs that we have. The real strength or courage in our life lies in spirituality that comes from our heart. The heart-based qualities include appreciation, compassion, connectedness and forgiveness, expressing kindness to things, animate and inanimate around us and volunteering to work to remove suffering from the planet. Through modern tools like the mobile phone and the internet we try to stay connected. It allows us to live a holistic life and to experience less self-centredness and get genuine fulfilment. Swami Vivekananda was all praise for heart over brain and in case of a conflict between the heart and the brain, he was in favour of a heart-based decision: 'The heart is great indeed; it is through the heart that come the great inspirations of life. I would a hundred times rather have a little heart and no brain, than be all brains and no heart, but he who has no heart and only brains dies of dryness.'<sup>5</sup>

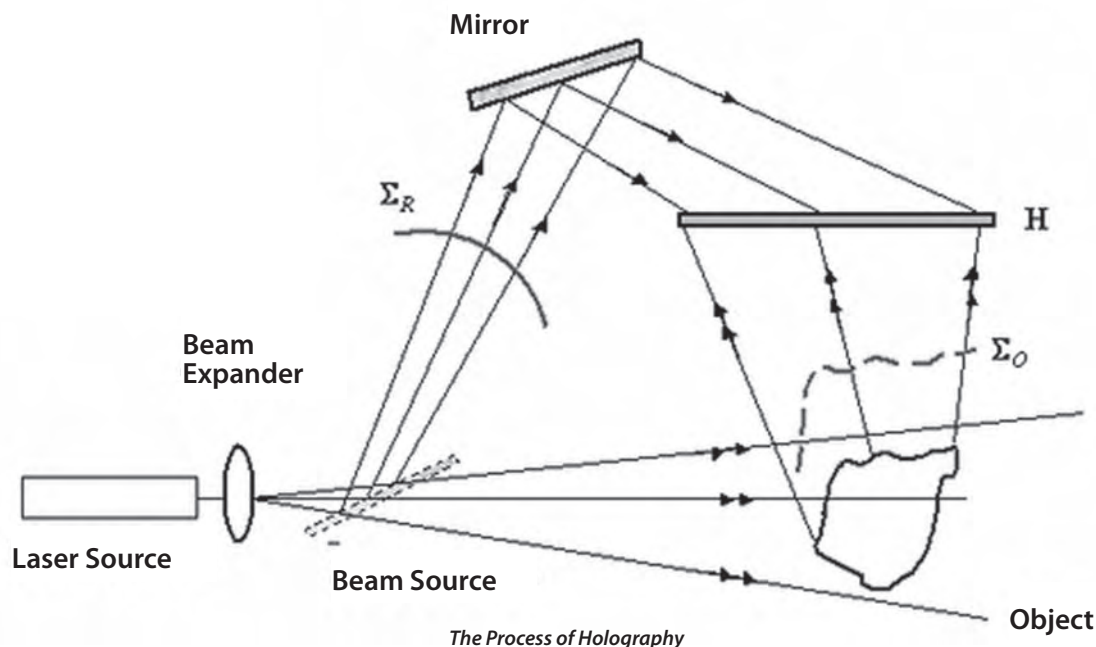
The *Mundaka Upanishad* says that there are two kinds of knowledge: 'There are two kinds of knowledge to be acquired—the higher and the lower.'<sup>6</sup> The lower knowledge is the objective knowledge of the working of the world, gained

by the brain through the sense organs, while the higher knowledge is the knowledge of the knower itself and it is subjective in nature. There is no subject-object relation in pure cognition.

Knowledge is fundamentally a subjective phenomenon; even objective knowledge has a subjective basis. Certain qualifications are, of course needed if one is to acquire subjective knowledge. Any third-person objective observation has at its base the first-person empirical experience of individual conscious observers. The fragmenting experiential separation is now fundamentally challenged by the interaction of the observed and observer in quantum theory, though appreciated to be crucial even for a coherent understanding of the physical world. Modern science rejected first-person phenomenological methods precisely because subjective experiences were too unreliable and variable, both intra-subjectively and inter-subjectively.

Socrates taught not only to 'know thyself' but one step further, that only true knowledge is self-knowledge. Swami Vivekananda said: 'Religion is not in doctrines, in dogmas, nor in intellectual argumentation; it is being and becoming, it is realisation' (2.43). Religion is coming face to face with spiritual truths. The human being is primarily a subject of experience. It is pertinent and interesting to note that Albert Einstein once said: 'Knowledge of what *is* does not open the door directly to what *should be*.'<sup>7</sup> We





may have the knowledge or very clear idea as to *what is*, but cannot be sure of attaining the goal. This subjective aspect of knowledge has nicely been introduced by the noted astrophysicist of the nineteenth century, Sir Arthur Eddington in his celebrated book, *The Nature of the Physical World*. He has nicely compared our acquisition of knowledge with catching fish from a lake with a net. This net corresponds to our sensory organs controlled by our intellect while the fish caught thus denotes the knowledge that is acquired. The quality of the net determines the types of fishes that can be caught. The fishes that escape from the net, that is, from our sensory perception, do not come under the purview of objective science. This is the limitation of science which is objective in nature.

Knowledge cannot be acquired as a whole since it is fragmented and acquired one by one through our sense organs through their limited sensing capabilities and have been extended only a bit by scientific instruments or detectors. Out of our five organs of knowledge, our eyes have

the longest range while the sense of touch has the shortest range. If we take the best sensory organ, eye, for the sake of argument, we can see only the 'visible' part, which is a minute part of the entire electromagnetic spectrum covering the short-wavelength X-ray and gamma-ray to the long-wavelength radio waves. The vast part of the electromagnetic spectrum on either side of the visible has been made accessible through scientific instruments. Cameras have been developed to photograph the submicroscopic properties of materials at the shortest wavelength as well as the longest wavelength. A technique called holography has enabled to capture the entire picture of the scenario in a single shot, not piece-wise; as a result, each point of the recorded picture stores the information from all places of the scenario including three-dimensional and wide-angle view. These characteristics enable the holographic technique to produce numerous two-dimensional photographs of the same scenario.

Even such a marvellous technique for providing the wholeness of vision cannot percept

the subtle or hidden non-visible information. Intellect can access or know only objectively the variety of information in the universe, while spiritual experience reveals the most subtle information, which ultimately reveals the unity behind all these varieties and makes us see that the world is not really as it seems. There are some materials in the form of a prism that disperses a single ray of white light into a variety of coloured rays on its other side. Spirituality is our innate nature by which one perceives a holistic vision of the entire universe. It is our true nature, being absolute existence, knowledge, and bliss. It is self-revealing. Nobody needs a certification of our existence whereas matter needs certification; it cannot self-manifest. Our innate urge is the hunger or craving for knowledge. Knowledge is both subjective, objective, and beyond. It is neither perceptible nor imperceptible to the senses. Human spirit manifests as nature evolves. There is no limiting adjunct. Bliss is our inner nature. By seeking sense pleasure externally, we end up in sorrow.

### ***From the Gross to the Subtle***

Spirituality is not getting something but giving up attachment, first at the gross level, thereby making room for being sensitive to the subtle truths. It is the evolution of our spiritual intelligence. Conquest of attachments like lust, greed, and anger are essential parameters of spiritual evolution which is transformation from the lower nature or mind to the higher nature or mind. The lower level deals with the concrete immediate physical environment, information, facts, and logic. Higher nature or mind means complete transformation of personality—even changing the whole physiology, not just temporarily as done through artificial means like medicines. It is done through eliminating the ego, thereby allowing the divinity within to manifest

itself. Lord Jesus said: ‘Empty thyself and I will fill thee.’<sup>8</sup> The meaning is that we have to destroy our egoism and fill ourselves with God. All of us have ego: the ego of possessions, the ego of family, the ego of learning, the ego of beauty, and so on.

True renunciation is the surrendering of this ego. The mind must be somehow disentangled from the snares of the world in which it has been enmeshed. This philosophy of emptying has later been illustrated in the Magdeburg hemispheres experiment. But we seem to be too afraid of losing our individuality as Swamiji used to say. The Bengali mystic poet Ramprasad used to sing: ‘*Korli ne ma amay khali, ar pari ne bhar bohite*; O’ mother you have not emptied me, I am unable to bear any more burden.’ He prays by lamenting to the Divine Mother, to empty himself from too many earthly possessions in order to get prepared for accepting the subtle. With this emptying of even the inborn prejudices, which generally guide our day-to-day activities, one can have a perfectly free natural movement of the self, devoid of any obstructions. This has been called *sattvic doer* in the Bhagavadgita: ‘The agent who is free from attachment, not egotistic, endowed with fortitude and diligence, and unperturbed by success and failure is said to be possessed of *sattva*.’<sup>9</sup>

It may not be out of context to mention that when Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi visited the residence of Kiran Babu [Lakshmi Nivas] near Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama, Varanasi on 5 November 1912, she was very happy with the spacious veranda of the house and commented: ‘We are indeed fortunate. A narrow place makes the mind narrow, while a commodious place expands it.’<sup>10</sup> It is no wonder that people living in spacious countryside are more accommodative than those living in narrow quarters in cities. It is well known that our moods and attitudes are

influenced by the surroundings we live in. Violence is inversely proportional to our perception of space. Silence indeed has a healing power.

Nature incessantly teaches us through all its changes. This has been illustrated in the Bhagavata through the story of a mystic devotee named Avadhuta, who gathered wisdom from twenty-four beings, things, or events and accepted all of them as his teachers.<sup>11</sup> He learns patience from the Earth, flexibility and adaptability from the air and the sky, and renunciation from the sun. From the honeybee he learns to absorb goodness alone not like the housefly that takes everything, leading to destruction. From the moth he learns not to be attached to the beautiful. If one wants to protect oneself, one should stay away from attractions. One has to keep one's mind wide open as the sky and deep as the ocean to comprehend and accommodate. One needs a completely receptive mind with the faculty of discernment.

In science one talks of filtering signals from gross material impurities. In electronics one talks of filtering from the noise of low frequency or high frequency. The important thing is the purity of mind. A spiritual aspirant employs two basic filters in succession, restraint of the internal and external senses, in order to make the mind receptive. The mind is then evolved through the external practices of non-violence, not stealing, truthfulness, brahmacharya, and not holding more than what is required; and the internal practices of cleanliness, cheerfulness, austerity, study of scriptures, and surrender to God. The aim is to transform the mind from the personal to the impersonal.

The above method increases the intensity of grasping the essence of the phenomenal universe and helps one live accordingly. It is a process of increasing sensitivity of the detection capability through the reduction of noise. Technically, for a scientist or physicist it means the improving of the capability of signal detection, SNR, signal

to noise ratio, in a device so that our body-mind complex becomes highly sensitive.

### ***Causality, Chance, and Oneness***

The relationship of one event with another is called causation. It is the foundation of classical physics as discovered by Isaac Newton in the seventeenth century. The laws of physical world are mechanical. The universe is like a giant clock. This means that the future course of events is wholly determined by the past and by the present.

Duality is the reason of phenomena taking place due to causality. For example: day and night, near and far, hot and cold, pleasure and happiness, and knowledge and ignorance. The difference or duality is due to varying strengths of entities like light, distance, temperature, habitation, and learning—all creations of the mind. All perception of duality is due to our mind. It is the mind that makes this distinction between good and evil, purity and impurity, and pleasure and pain. Mind cannot exist in isolation. Every experience in the world is mixed with pleasure and pain. It exists due to the interaction with the environment. We are trained to avoid certain things and hanker for certain other things. The things in themselves are not avoidable or desirable. It is the mind that serves as the instrument of identity. Truth or the unity flashes the moment the mind is free from desires and prejudices. The more one can free oneself from the meshes of the world, the more one goes towards the ideal. When worldly propensities are calmed with senses withdrawn from the world, the mind is free from all anxieties of the past, present, and future. It then remains unperturbed in or indifferent to worldly actions. As a result one is above injunctions and prohibitions, above good and evil, and virtue and vice. One apparently casts off one's identity and adjuncts. The mind

is completely annihilated. The causal determination of things stops. Apart from causality, time and space are also transcended. Such a person is called *jivanmukta*, free while living. Good and evil continue to exist, but the mind makes no distinction. To such a person nothing is good or bad. One stands as a witness to them, apparently extremely tolerant.

Quantum theory has been regarded as one of the most successful scientific theories ever formulated where the strict adherence to causality does not apply. Matter in its finest state is neither law-bound nor lawless. No one can ever know the exact nature of the subatomic particles because in every experiment concerning subatomic particles, the observer interferes with the observed phenomenon. The very act of observation seems to affect the state of the particle and one cannot observe the subatomic particles without changing the object. This is the interpretation of Heisenberg's uncertainty principle. This forms the essential insight of quantum physics where the texture of reality is one in which the subject and the object, the observer and the observed, are not separable. In other words the mind of the observer or subject influences what is being observed; but one thing is certain, they form part of a single unit.

The entire universe is a hologram where each particle is connected with the whole of the rest of the universe. The old Newtonian paradigm of dualistic world vision, cause and effect, is today replaced by the new paradigm, the 'holistic paradigm', a new reading of the non-dualistic philosophy of Vedanta discovered thousands of years ago.

All phenomena of the world are in relation to the observer. Objects as they appear are relative and not true in the real sense. Space is relative, motion is relative, and so is time. No event can be traced back to a prior event which can be said to be its cause and every event becomes

a *chance* or a probable occurrence. In quantum physics this total probability is measured by the so-called overlapping function integrated over the entire space and it certainly would lead to the highest probability. So, all kinds of things can be accommodated in the wide open space. High probability is almost as good as certainty.

Though spirituality is apparently beyond cause and effect, there seems to be a subtle causality, a higher kind of determinism that determines the universe at a far deeper level subjectively and not objectively. Here the quest for certainty ends not in knowing but in becoming, in the transformation of the self. The goal of spiritual life is realisation of one's Self. This realisation is uncertain from the intellectual point of view apprehending the pitfalls. To a spiritual aspirant, pleasure in life is impermanent and so it is renounced for a certainty of realisation. Thus spirituality is not irrational but super-rational.

### ***Some Illustrative Physical Examples in Spirituality***

**Law of Inertia** • According to the law of inertia of Newton originally applicable to inanimate objects, the status of the object at rest or in motion would continue to do so unless external forces act on it. To maintain status one has to remove or eliminate the resistance to motion. Spirituality is the march for highest power and it is beyond space, time, and causation (STC) as we have discussed earlier, while all worldly events are controlled by the law of STC. All worldly matter or events are in natural balance with the three basic qualities of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* in different proportions. Any imbalance in worldly activity is automatically restored according to the laws of STC. Since spirituality is beyond all the three qualities, events in the spiritual plane are not expected to be bonded or tied up with the law of STC.



Let us now examine the status of karma or actions in our life in the light of this law. There are three effects of each of our actions. The grossest one is the result that one is familiar with. We all work in this world to get something. The other two are rather subtle. The second is the tendency or affinity that is silently captured in us as habit while the third is the most subtle and far-reaching impression producing a cosmic effect, that is carried over with us across many lifetimes. For spiritual people the purpose of action is to create auspicious tendencies. They also see karma as a test of their inner qualities like capability, patience, and perseverance. More importantly, it is the test or control of the obstacles to spiritual life such as desire, anger, greed, delusion, and jealousy. The last two effects are carried over with us unconsciously determining our future life. That is why spiritual teachers advise over and over again not to work with attachment. Such work creates the five-fold afflictions talked of in Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra*: 'The causes of suffering are not seeing things as they are: the sense of 'I', attachment, aversion, and clinging to life.'<sup>12</sup> All these attachments are the resistance impeding the state of motion.

The mental and emotional afflictions are spiritual ignorance, misplaced identity, emotional attractions and repulsions, and strong force of mundane existence—the five root causes of our bondage. The attachments make one to reduce one's inherent energy like resistance in physical motion. The earned tendencies and affinity is the criteria for choosing the environment for the next lifetime, where the qualities would get a chance to flourish. What we do, think, or say leaves its mark on the mind and that is the software that runs our minds. The hardware is our genetic code.

**Law of Induction** • The law of induction applies to similar class of materials, not to dissimilar

materials. Induction will take place if a non-magnetic material is brought near a magnet. This is just like an electric charge or a magnetic pole, where the opposites attract while the likes repel. To increase the effect of attraction or repulsion, one should be nearer and also the medium should be conducive, scientifically called permissivity. It may be appropriate to state that values cannot be taught but can only be caught if one is prepared for them in the body-mind complex. One cannot force anybody to eat something unless one accepts or desires it. In other words, why somebody likes or dislikes something is one's in-built quality.

All types of electromagnetic signals are present in the atmosphere—radio, television, mobile signals, and so on—but only the right receiver can receive the respective signal.

Among the human beings, one finds a sustained relationship and intimacy only among like-minded people. Friendship and marriage lasts only with similar kind of people. If you send out positive emotions, they will come back to you. Negative emotions such as hatred and anger will boomerang and catch you sooner or later to give you a negative experience. That is why the scriptures stress that actions are likely to be successful only if there is consonance between thought, word, and action. The scriptures always advise the spiritual aspirants to follow that which is favourable and avoid that which is unfavourable: '*Anukulasya sankalpah pratikulya vivarjanam*; accept the favourable and reject the unfavourable.'<sup>13</sup>

**Law of Attraction and Repulsion** • Thought is a force and the product of mind, which is a subtle matter. The laws of electricity and magnetism were discovered by Newton in the seventeenth century and James Clark Maxwell in 1873 before and around the time of Swami Vivekananda. But humankind has to learn and apply these

principles to solve problems related to the inner world as well. The simplest definition for the universal law of attraction is 'like attracts like'. If you are a happy person, you tend to draw happy people to you. Our minds are like magnets that get attracted to whatever we give our continued attention to. Everything that comes into our lives is attracted by the thoughts and images we hold in our minds. Our thoughts influence our lives, so whatever we think about the most, will eventually manifest. It does not matter whether our thoughts are positive, negative, or neutral; the law of attraction operates blindly and will respond to them. However, the law of attraction can be strengthened, weakened, or postponed by the laws of karma. Disharmony with love brings many damaging and painful experiences. Harmony with love brings many uplifting and joyous experiences.

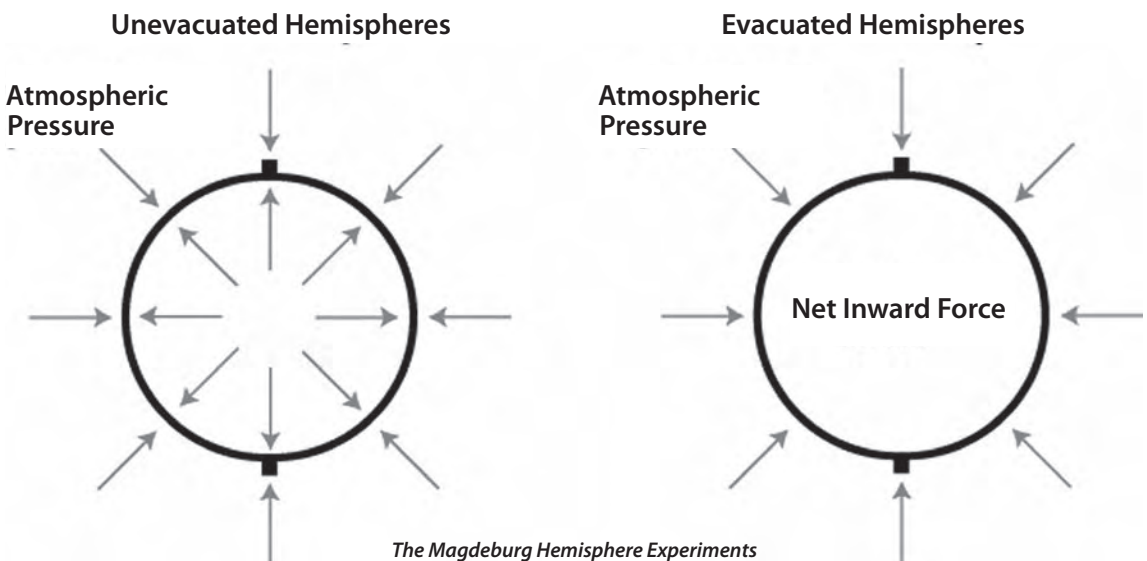
The mind is calmed while in peaceful environments like places of worship. On the other hand, a highly disturbed person spreads unrest among others. Negative qualities such as depression, selfishness, desperation, greediness, and unkindness are infectious. If we have these elements

in our personalities we will attract similar people. Similarly positive qualities such as love, happiness, kindness, delight, and generosity are infectious and attract similar people. Our core beliefs attract similar situations and people. The law of attraction works on many levels. If you are out of harmony with life you may attract food which disagrees with you. You are completely responsible for your life. This means that *everything* that happens to you is in accordance with the universal laws of attraction.

How this law of attraction has the capacity of influencing our life has been illustrated in the 'Devi Mahatmyam' of the *Markandeya Purana*: 'From the bodies of Indra and other gods, also sprang forth a very great light. And (all) this light united together.'<sup>14</sup> So, good produces good.

### **Laws of Gravitation and Law of Emptying: Magdeburg Hemisphere Experiments**

These laws are commonly used in science whereby heavy material is pulled down by gravitational forces while lighter material is pushed up due to buoyancy. The more one is loaded with



worldly matter the more one will be pulled down with that load. But as one gets rid of this load the mind will automatically be filled up with the subtle. We want to avoid or escape from something: the world and its suffering, in particular. In physics the escape velocity of an object from gravitational force is defined as the velocity with which the object is projected or thrown so that the kinetic energy overcomes the earth's gravitational potential energy on that object. The higher the mass, the greater would be the escape velocity as is dictated by the balance of potential energy with the assigned kinetic energy. It is pulled down by the gross potential energy.

What is it that pulls down? Our old earthly desires are the worst gravitational pulls on the mind; they constantly pull the mind down to earthly belongings. Therefore, we are not able to progress. Less baggage is needed while going up in the mountain. In the beginning, in the lower base camps, we can carry enough baggage, but not as we go higher. Impressions accumulate in the mind for many lifetimes and create the weight that pulls us down. For every upward step, one needs to reduce the baggage. One climbs only without the baggage. In the physics of gravitation it is said that the lower the mass, the smaller is the velocity needed to escape from the earth's gravitational field. This reduction—natural and spontaneous—is because we want to achieve the highest; it is called renunciation. The principle of renunciation is illustrated by this physical law of emptying. The emptying of our ego is needed for spirituality. The law of Nature is that if you give away something it will come back to you in some other way. Nature abhors vacuum.

Magdeburg hemispheres are two half-spheres of equal size. Placing them together traps the air between them. This air is merely trapped and not compressed, so the pressure inside is the same

as the pressure of the atmosphere outside the spheres. That is to say, the air is pushing equally strongly inside, as it is outside.

When the hemispheres are first placed together, the air pressure within them balances the air pressure outside, and they are easily pulled apart. When air is removed from the interior of the hemispheres, however, there is no longer any outward pushing force. The atmospheric pressure outside dominates, pushing hard the hemispheres together and keeping them from being separated.

### ***Crystal Growth on Purity***

According to material scientists, a growing crystal starts from pure ingredients, as pure as possible. As the crystal growth progresses with pulling of the seed, it leaves behind in the solution, the gross impurities and by repeating the process a purer crystal is formed. So spirituality starts from cultivating moral principles. It has to go through the freeing of mind from both external and internal attachments. After getting rid of the external attachments, when one sits for meditation in a reasonably quiet atmosphere, all the internal prejudices come up and continue to disturb the apparently vacant mind. The more one progresses in meditation the more the inner thoughts or impurities come up. This is like cleaning an old ink pot with fresh water. The more the pot is cleaned the more the minute ink stains show up in the clean background.

### ***Meditation: Bose-Einstein Condensation***

The higher the temperature, the greater will be the energy in a molecule which increases the disorder in the molecules as they are energised. This disorder or complexity has been referred to as entropy or chaos of the molecules. If matter is cooled to very low temperatures or to absolute zero, that is minus 273.15 degrees Celsius, then

the entropy of that matter is decreased and matter comes down to a zero-energy state. The entire mass of molecules behaves as a single atom losing all its characteristics like shape, charge, and polarisation. This is termed as Bose-Einstein Condensation. Based on this, let us examine our brain neurons during meditation.

Various thoughts that constantly crowd our minds are the sum total of the simultaneous activity of different neurons. A large number of thought vibrations in our brain, normally in the waking state, are in the highest entropy through continuous stimulation of the neural network. Our five sense organs serve as important pathways to increase entropy. Closing our eyes helps in the process of concentration and also neural excitation is minimised. When one concentrates, there is a resultant decrease in the disorder of the neural system. The synchronicity of a specific group of neurons increases while the neural activity reduces. The entropy of neural activity is reduced considerably in the same manner that matter drops to zero level approaching absolute zero temperature. The neural firing decreases both in amplitude and frequency in the unconscious sleep state. While in meditation, we consciously try to calm down these activities. With the progress of meditation the neurons become synchronous. No doubt when this orchestra becomes perfectly synchronous, the meditator enjoys absolute bliss.

### **Law of Thermodynamics on Energy and Flow**

Thermodynamics, a branch of physics, states that the total amount of energy in the universe is constant, although energy can be transformed from one form to another. But it cannot be created or destroyed. This is equally applicable to the spiritual world as in the physical world. This is based on the belief that the world follows a perfect

cosmic order. The conservation of energy means that the universe keeps a set of books that must balance for every energy transaction. But this is also what the law of karma says: 'What goes around comes around.' Contained within the structure of the law of karma is the principle that if one lives a productive life of meritorious work, one will enjoy its fruits. If, on the other hand, one leads a non-productive or destructive life, one must suffer as a result of it.

Thermodynamics also directs the direction of flow of energy. Material things are not eternal but degrade with time. Everything degrades eventually due to chaos. Batteries run down, machines break, buildings crumble, roads decay, living things die, and so on. When left to the natural state, all things deteriorate and eventually cease to function. Our present is determined by what we thought, said, and did in the past. What we are thinking, saying, and doing now will determine our future. The law of karma is simply the law of cause and effect in action. And today's actions will determine what the future will be like for us. Hence we truly have full control of our lives and well-being.

### **Making One Fit for Spirituality**

Each science requires its own particular method and instruments. An astronomer cannot show you the rings of Saturn with the naked eye; one needs a telescope.

The essential qualification for spirituality is strong dispassion for the fruits of activity in this world or beyond. The *Katha Upanishad* declares: 'This [spiritual] knowledge is not to be obtained by argument, but it is easy to understand it when taught by a teacher who beholds no difference.'<sup>15</sup> That is why the Gita says: 'Resorting to a solitary spot; eating but little; body, speech, and mind controlled, ever engaged in meditation and concentration; possessed of dispassion.'<sup>16</sup>



If a person gets some experience without pursuing such a discipline, it is merely an illusion. True spiritual experience cannot be obtained without rigorous practices. A stumbling upon truth cannot stand the test of time. Real experience transforms the character and conduct of the practitioner. Conquest of attachment, lust, greed, and anger are some of the indicators of spiritual evolution. Shortcuts like psychedelic drugs are temporary and are often associated with horrible after- and side-effects. The eighteenth chapter of the Gita enumerates different qualities desirable in a spiritual aspirant and classifies them on the basis of the three gunas: *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*.

Our body-mind complex has to be seasoned with rigorous spiritual practices just like every musical instrument has to be properly tuned before playing it. The aspirant will at times experience some peace of mind, joy, and some glimpses of spiritual progress giving the confidence that one is not chasing a mirage. Otherwise why should one renounce the pleasures of life for an uncertain destination? The greater the spiritual height the more would be the compassion or sympathy. A person driven by passions cannot have true compassion. It is important that these basic qualities are acquired.

Our body-mind complex is like a garden which can be cultivated or neglected as we are its master gardener. One can cultivate this garden or ignore it and let the weeds grow. The Bengali mystic poet Ramprasad sang: '*Mon tumi kri-shi kaj jano na, emon manab jamin roilo patit, abad korle pholto sona*; O' mind you do not know farming / such [great] human land lies barren, had you cultivated it would have produced gold.'

One who wishes to receive the divine grace will have to purify one's mind. It is well known that conversion of ice to water or water to vapour requires some energy in the form of latent

heat. In the same way a spiritual aspirant has to gradually acquire the necessary prerequisites in the prescribed discipline to arrive at the highest spiritual truth.

Being open and adaptable increases the chances of realising the spiritual truths quickly. As one grows spiritually, the higher self becomes more and more manifest and the aspirant begins to realise that everything is the play of the divine. God comes to us in different forms. God comes to us as a teacher to give instruction. Let us try to be in tune with that nature and witness God's play without any grumble. Let us become God's playmate. The attitude of a spiritual person should be as described in the *Manu Samhita*: 'Let him not desire to die, let him not desire to live; let him wait for his [appointed] time, as a servant [waits] for his instructions.'<sup>17</sup>

I conclude with a Vedic mantra: 'By means of vows one obtains spiritual initiation, by spiritual initiation one obtains divine grace, by divine grace one obtains faith, by faith one obtains truth.'<sup>18</sup>



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11. See Bhagavata, 11.7-9.
12. *Patanjali Yoga Sutra*, 1.3.
13. Gopala Bhatta Gosvami, *Haribhakti Vilasa*, 11.676.
14. *Devi Mahatmyam*, 2.11.
15. *Katha Upanishad*, 1.2.9.
16. Gita, 18.52.
17. *Manusmriti*, 6.45.
18. Yajur Veda, 19.30.

# REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,  
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications



## ***Christ the Guru: A Vedantic Key to the Gospels***

Muni Narayana Prasad

D K Printworld, Veda Sri, F 395, Sudarshan Park, New Delhi 110015.  
Website: [www.dkprintworld.com](http://www.dkprintworld.com).  
2014. xi + 456 pp. ₹ 1200. HB. ISBN 9788124607503.

The Rig Veda says: 'One exists, sages call it by many names', and Hinduism celebrates this spirit of abundance of spiritual roads to attain liberation. Muni Narayana Prasad is a sage who tries to understand the Jesus-event through Vedantic hermeneutics. The book under consideration is a work of genius but will not be accepted by orthodox Christians. In a long discussion regarding interreligious dialogue vis-a-vis the Hindu position on tolerance and equality of the major religions of the world with me, the abbot of a Benedictine monastery in the US wrote: 'We believe that God incarnate has come into the world, not just as another incarnation as would be understood in Hinduism, but in a unique way. That person, Jesus, laid down some principles that were not simply one path among others, but really applicable to all men. So we see them as having a kind of absolute quality as being directly inspired by God, the very words of a Divine Person, who is also a perfect man. To say that all spiritual roads, all religions lead to the same destination seems interesting, but we would say that this is relativism, even syncretism. Of course, many things in life are only relative. Many ideas of Catholic theologians are just interesting opinions, it is true, but, nevertheless, we do not accept the idea the Christianity is just one possible road ad [*sic*] nothing more.'

Therein lies the problem of a book like *Christ the Guru*. It is one of the best books today on a synoptic study of the Gospels and Vedanta but it will not be acceptable as a work of true scholarship by the Christians. For that matter, any book that says

that all paths to Brahman qua God are equally valid and are scholarly will be rejected by Semitic theologians as being unorthodox and lacking in rigour. The logic is that if one were truly rigorous then one would know that Hinduism errs by being relativistic; both morally and spiritually! In that same email to me, the abbot further wrote: 'The Church is the royal road to Truth, despite the weakness of so many bad Christians. This belief, Christian Faith, seems to be a sort of madness when seen from the standpoint of one who does not have the Catholic Christian faith, but there is no contradiction in the affirmation of Catholic faith. We can show that it is not contradictory (and therefore false). We cannot prove by reason the truths of the Faith, however. This only comes with a special grace of God.'

Muni Narayana Prasad writes in his *Introduction*: 'When the great religions of the world are carefully studied, it becomes obvious that all seek to teach a living wisdom that brings supreme happiness. All religions then aim to help humanity attain happiness, rendering life in the here and now peaceful. As such, the differences existing between religions would then be understood to belong to what is inessential and not universal. ... the goal of all religions is one alone—the Happiness of Man. ... it becomes apparent that what Jesus revealed is none other than the same wisdom or supreme happiness of the Vedanta philosophy' (3).

Apparently Muni Narayana Prasad does not have any 'special grace of God' and errs by thinking all religions aim for and lead to human sanctification and happiness! Therefore this book needs to be reviewed solely from a Vedantic standpoint and should be read with deep faith for the Hindu tradition which allows such a work to be written by a stalwart of the Hindu faith community. Since if one were a Christian and wrote a book on the Hindu scriptures in the same spirit as Muni Narayana Prasad, then one would meet the fates of the likes of the Jesuits, Anthony de Mello and Jacques

Dupuis. The Rig Vedic dictum is what the Hindus believe in and it has little to do with faith; it has everything to do with tolerance and cosmopolitanism and Emmanuel Levinas's concept of hospitality. This book is about hospitality and cosmopolitanism. The *Chhandogya Upanishad's* declaration, 'Everything is Brahman', is the title of a section of this book. It is natural that Hindu sages will see the Godhead everywhere and not be stuck within the confines of bigotry. Before Muni Narayana Prasad, Fathers Johannes and Dandoy had done similar synoptical cultural work, but all those two Jesuits could show was that Vedanta leads to Jesus Christ. So their conclusion was that if one were a true Vedantist, she or he will become a Christian! Muni Narayana Prasad's book is a corrective to such views expressed in the influential *Why I am not a Hindu* by Kancha Ilaiah and the concept of the 'anonymous Christian' by admittedly the best twentieth century Catholic theologian Karl Rahner S.J.

The book under review is exhaustive in its deep reading of the Gospels. Part one is thematic and should be read by all including Christian seminarians for understanding the Beatitudes. It is truly a tour de force and I can testify of its being more lucid and to the point than many Christian commentaries on the Bible I have read. Then Muni Narayana Prasad's erudition shows forth—he analyses each of the *Gospels* minutely. It will suffice to discuss his interrogation of the *Gospel of Glory*, otherwise known as the *Gospel According to John*, he connects John 14:6 with the *Taittiriya Upanishad's* third chapter. He concludes that in John 14:6, Jesus speaks of the Vedantic truths. The *Gospel of Glory* is considered by biblical scholars to be one of the toughest biblical books to study, let alone write about. The author has not only studied the *Gospel of Glory* thoroughly but he performs the necessary Hindu theological work of connecting everything he reads in the Bible with that of the Hindu scriptures. This book proves that being caught up in dogma is a dangerous ideological position and reaffirms the tenets of the Sanatana Dharma. Indeed all religions lead to God.

This book should be compulsory reading not only in religious studies' syllabi globally but within the domains of professional philosophy. More importantly it should be available in Christian

seminaries as part of the compulsory books on biblical interpretation. It would be an injustice to call this beautifully typeset book with an essential glossary of Vedantic terms at the end, a work of Indology or Indian Studies. It is rather in the tradition of Christian Studies or Christology. Unless one studies this book in a seminary, one would have not studied Christology. It complements the historical Jesus Movement within Christianity and should be given the same importance as John P Meier's *A Marginal Jew* series. I have not recently come across a better work on Christology than the book under review.

Subhasis Chattopadhyay

Assistant Professor of English,  
Ramananda College, Bishnupur



### **Make Me a Man: Message of Swami Vivekananda**

T S Avinashilingam

Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya,  
SRKV Post, Periyanaickenpalayam,  
Coimbatore 641 020. Website: [www.srkv.org](http://www.srkv.org). 2014. xv + 212 pp. ₹ 100. PB.

The author of this book is a celebrated pioneer of giving tangible shape to the 'man-making' dynamic ideas of Swami Vivekananda. As Swami Abhiramananda, the secretary of Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya, Combatore says, Avinashilingam was 'an eminent educationist and an inspired freedom fighter [and] dedicated his entire life for the noble cause of providing education as envisaged by Swami Vivekananda' (vii). Moreover, this dynamic educationist was also blessed by Swami Shivananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna.

No wonder that 'Ayya' emerged as the architect of the Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya, Coimbatore which is now one of the most active educational centres.

This book shows the enormous range of his ideas which he absorbed and gave a concrete shape. The most crucial were Swamiji and Gandhi. It consists of eighteen essays of varied hues but all centered on ethics and values for youth, as exemplified in the lives of pioneering achievers such as Edison, Swamiji, Acharya Shankara, and other stalwarts.

All the essays evoke the spirit of dynamic, man-making education as it gets manifested in

the development of character as the root of all achievement. For what is needed are shown in his essay on 'Foundations for Greatness'. This greatness, as shown in Gandhi for instance, is a blend of not just ethical but also spiritual aspects of holistic education. This consists of renunciation of what the author calls 'lower joys and proceed further to serve mankind' and this is embodied in the lives of 'Buddhas, Christs, Shankaras, Ramanujas, Ramakrishnas, Vivekanandas and Gandhis' (14).

This requires the foundation which inculcate 'social and ethical values in education.' This is a salutary reminder that the advancement of science and technology divorced from value systems is fraught with potential misery. Avinashilingam's articles perhaps echo the implications of Bertrand Russell's warning that increase in knowledge without wisdom would only increase sorrow. Values and ethics transcend all faiths and religions and as such are free from theological conundrums.

This second edition of this valuable book is timely: our youth are going through evident crises of getting sandwiched between the development models and the materialistic models of a consumption society. This volume addresses these issues. Educationists concerned with problems of youth would find in this book extremely valuable perspectives for enriching their pedagogic skills other than mere competitive scores.

Prof. M Sivaramkrishna

(Former Chair) Head of Department of English  
Osmania University, Hyderabad



### **Ramayana at a Glance**

Sadguru Sant Keshavadas

Motilal Banarsidass, 41 U A, Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi 110 007. Website: [www.mtb.com](http://www.mtb.com). 2015. 211 pp. ₹ 245. PB. ISBN 9788120805453.

The benefits that Ramayana bestows are multi-dimensional. An average worldling who reads the Ramayana with reverence and faith gains mental purity. The evolved devotee, with his mind free from worldly desires, gains by the study of Ramayana's spiritual intimations. By the regular study of Ramayana, the enlightened spiritual preceptor gains vivid envisioning of subtle Vedantic

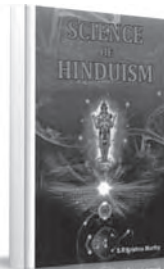
truths. This book is a lucid narrative of the Ramayana by an acknowledged saint and 'a prophet of divine love and universal peace' (212) whose very name means 'saint who is the servant of the Lord' (ibid.). Words of the spiritually mature, both oral and written, ring with an element of certitude and authenticity of ineffable nature.

The ethereal beauty and chastening influence of the book are best experienced by a reverential perusal of its contents. Even the best review of the book cannot describe the mystic significance and splendour of the narrative. The rare devotion and spiritual insight of the noble author unerringly glimpses the latent divinity of Sri Ramachandra, the great personality, and holds aloft the divine hero of the epic for our emulation of his sterling human virtues and silent marvel at and adoration of his divine traits. The narrative is simple and racy. The book can be read and enjoyed as an infallible spiritual elixir, by the young and the old, for their spiritual rejuvenation and growth.

The allegorical significance of the epic and the popular song on Ramayana, *shuddha brahma paratpara ram*, contained in this well-designed book enhance its value.

N Hariharan

Madurai



### **Science of Hinduism**

S R Krishna Murthy

Suneeti Prakashan, No. 7, 36th Main, Bhavani HBCS, Banagirinagar, BSK 3rd Stage, Bengaluru 560 085. 2015. xvi + 305 pp. ₹ 500. PB.

This book attempts to establish the legitimate claim of Hinduism to the status of science of which the hallmark is compliance with reason. The narrative exudes the sense of righteous indignation of a dedicated votary of Sanatana Dharma at the raw deal meted out to Hinduism by wilful neglect of and wanton blindness to its supreme merits. The author who ranges extensively over this topic adduces strong reasons for the claim of Hinduism to the status of science by comparing and contrasting the theories of Hinduism with those of other religions. The author's painstaking research and his proficiency in Sanskrit enable him to build up his case convincingly



by marshalling voluminous facts and figures and citing Sanskrit quotations from the Vedas, Puranas, and other texts to buttress his stand.

The book has eighteen chapters apart from four appendices. Chapter one titled 'Time' proves, by advancing unimpeachable evidences, that the Vedic cyclical time frame that holds time as without beginning and end, and is upheld by the Vedas is the only tenable theory as against the biblical time frame, the Big Bang theory, the geological time frame, the ice-cap theory, and the Hubble's theory—which are all shown to be grossly inadequate. This chapter records the author's findings that the river Brahmaputra is verily the river Sarasvati wrongly considered as having disappeared and the word 'Aryan' represents not a race but a set of distinctive attributes. This chapter contains the refutation of the Aryan migration theory. The Hindu conception of the entire gamut of time, from a second to the lifespan of the god Brahma, is also given. Chapter two titled 'Scriptures' briefly surveys the constituents of the corpus of Hindu scriptural literature such as, the Vedas, the Puranas, the Itihasas, and the Smritis. The multiplicity of Hindu deities and its rationale are also pointed out.

Chapter three investigates the Vedic theory of creation enunciated unambiguously in the Vedas, the Upanishads, and the Puranas, and proves its soundness. The theories of Islam and Christianity are shown to be deficient. Even the use of the term 'create' is shown to be incorrect as Brahman, the ultimate reality, only enters the universe and enlivens it. Profuse Sanskrit quotations from the Vedas are furnished to prove the validity of the theory of cosmos as the effect of existence, which is a key Vedantic doctrine. The theory of the cosmos as the effect of non-existence, that appears apparently to be articulated by the scriptures is proved untenable. Ambiguities are held to arise due to the misreading and misinterpretation of the relevant texts. The commentaries of Sayanacharya and Dayananda Sarasvati of Arya Samaj on various Vedic passages are analysed and shown to be deficient and having false interpretations.

Chapter four titled 'Genesis' opens with some issues raised in the *Taittiriya Upanishad* and details the step-by-step teaching on Brahman by the god Varuna to his son, Bhrigu. The essentials for

creation are the five entities of food, vital energy, the mind, the intellect, and bliss. The concept of bliss implies its prerequisite of the absence of attachment and aversion. This lofty teaching is shown to be the source of the basic philosophy of modern management.

Chapter five titled 'The Vedic Science of Cosmology' throws fresh light on many topics discussed in chapter three. The key theory discussed here is the cosmological theory expounded by Acharya Shankara in the text *Panchikaranam*, to explain the process of creation. This theory has a pronounced scientific flavour and is a powerful factor that strengthens the claim of Hinduism to be called science. The Vedic view is shown to be neither one of creation nor evolution of cosmos. It is only a process of gradual manifestation of what is latent or unmanifest. Several points of Sanskrit grammar are raised to analyse the words used in the texts and prove the contention that they do not mean 'create'.

Chapter six titled '*Vedocchishtam Jagatsarvam*' meaning that the whole world is nothing but leftovers from the Vedas, the precise connotations of the words 'maya' and 'mithya' are arrived at by an investigation into their roots. Interestingly, the word 'maya' is interpreted as immeasurable or inexact by an inquiry into its root. *Ashvamedha Sukta* is analysed threadbare. The Puranic portrayal of the coordinated work of creation, preservation, and destruction is reconciled with the Vedic view of creation.

Chapter seven titled '*Aditya Hridayam* or the Cosmos' advances the thesis that the phrase '*tat savituh*' in the hymn *Aditya Hridayam* denotes less the visible sun than Narayana, the Brahman. Chapter eight titled 'Cosmos and Trinity' discusses how far Puranas are reconciled to the Vedas on the subject of creation. Chapter nine studies the versatile genius of Manu, the law-giver and inquires into his immense contribution to fields such as astronomy and cosmology.

Chapter ten titled 'God: Real or Unreal?' underlines the ultimate reality of the non-dual absolute Brahman and shows that the pluralistic universe and the various gods of the Hindu pantheon have only relative truth and aid the spiritually-ignorant to outgrow their misconceptions based on diversity and realise the one Truth. Chapter eleven

titled 'Hindu Practices: Monism or Pluralism?' discusses the relevance of idol worship and other practices in Hinduism to the ultimate aim of unitive vision and shows that the idols and icons help the aspirants to reach the formless through forms.

Chapter twelve titled 'Temples' investigates the role of temples in Hindu religion and points out the spiritual significance and implications of temple-architecture. Chapter thirteen titled 'The Magnificence of the Hindu Caste System' focuses on the value of caste system as 'the most rational and equitable system of providing everybody an equal opportunity of participating in ... society, each according to his capacity' (202). Chapter fourteen titled 'The Broad Band of Hindu Philosophy' examines various facets of Hindu Philosophy and sums up its essence. Chapter fifteen titled 'Hinduism and Religions: Thoughts and Evolution' makes a comparative study of various religious practices of Hinduism and other major religions and proves the rationality and catholicity of Hinduism.

Chapter sixteen titled 'Traditions' shows the rational basis of the fourfold values of dharma, artha, kama, and moksha, and proves how the needs of temporal existence and the imperatives of transcendental life are reconciled by the vital bridging concept of dharma. It shows how various Vedic thoughts and practices like festivals help the rejuvenation and enrichment of economy. Chapter seventeen shows how Hinduism ripened into a vibrant and enduring culture in contrast with the transient ancient and modern civilisations of the world. The final chapter titled 'Summation', recapitulates the essential points discussed earlier and gives the quintessence of the narrative.

The bibliography given at the end of the book is quite helpful in encouraging further research and perusal by inquisitive minds. Charts, tables, and the explanatory notes given in the four appendices at the end are quite illuminating and deal with a lot of technical points.

The salient features of the book are: profuse Sanskrit quotations from the Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas, Smritis, and Itihasas and analysis of their significance; courageous and reasoned criticism of misinterpretations by eminent authorities like Sayanacharya; militant tone and tenor of the narrative that is a reflection of the author's intense sense

of righteous indignation; scholarly discussions of points of Sanskrit grammar; and a crusading zeal in proving the scientific basis of Hinduism. The book is certainly a welcome repast for research-oriented intellectuals and a source of pride for Hindus.

N Hariharan



### **Īśa Upaniṣad**

Anirvan

Trans. Gautam Dharmapal

Akshaya Prakashan, 2/18, Ansari Road, New Delhi 110 002. Website: [www.akshayaprakashan.com](http://www.akshayaprakashan.com). 2014. 155 pp. ₹ 250. PB. ISBN 9788188643547.

The prime Upanishad for the common reader as well as the devout scholar, *Isha Upanishad*'s first line says it all: All this is encompassed by God. The rishi calls upon us to absorb this truth and proceed to live the life divine on earth. As Sri Anirvan says, the first two mantras lay down our timetable for life: 'We get it in a trinity of Right vision, Right enjoyment and Right action. There is nothing beyond this in man's life' (37).

The Upanishad leads us steadily from the known to the unknown, from real life to visionary existence. The steps include non-attachment, for according to Srīmat Anirvan, the usage of the term *nara* in the second mantra indicates detachment; self-awareness which is the knowledge that a part of the immortal resides in us; and a knowledge of God.

The last-mentioned, a knowledge of God, is perhaps the most difficult to attain as we are always caught between faith and unbelief. With Srīmat Anirvan's crystalline method in explicating Vedantic terms, we draw a little nearer to the Absolute that is an all-pervading stillness, which is yet moving with life. This imperishable Absolute has also chosen to be in us as the indwelling Universal. Indeed, as *prana* it is the indweller in everything—the physical, the mental, and the supra-mental. This is how we are able to move in step with the cosmic rhythm and gain the wide, inclusive consciousness, the *vijnanamaya chaitanya*.

Need we despair that going up the steps and gaining the knowledge of Brahman is difficult for the common aspirant? Certainly not. Simple faith can help us, says Srīmat Anirvan: 'We can have this knowledge through His infusion, inspiration,

interpenetration in us. Then the simple faith about which we have talked earlier comes handy. He is; He pervades and covers everything as sky, as air, as light; He is everywhere as Life-Force—*Prāṇa*, as consciousness' (81).

Being a close student of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and having produced a Bengali classic in his translation of the Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine*, Srimat Anirvan posits the ascending evolution 'within ourselves in the intense aspiration of Seeing the Truth by removing the covering obstruction of the golden lid' (82). As we progressed by our aspiration and reject the error of the shrinking of one's consciousness, we burst out of the egoistic shell of separativity, to use a phrase of Sri Aurobindo. It need not necessarily mean dissolution if one is to gain this experience. He then becomes blessed by Agni, the fire-god. According to Srimat Anirvan, this is why there is the reference to memory in the concluding verse: 'O Poet-Doer, *Kavikratu* whatever is already there as done or accomplished (*Kṛta*) in the harmonious ordaining of the Universe, remembering it, transmit its force of becoming (*Sambhūti*) in me' (139).

We can never have too many translations and commentaries of the prime and golden Upanishad, the *Isha*. Srimat Anirvan's is a special one as his mastery of Vedic Sanskrit and Bengali coupled with his own austerities have made him an effective conduit to pass on revealed truths to the future generations. We are particularly lucky to have Gautam Dharmapal rising equally to the occasion and gifting us with an unambiguous, total experience of the ancient Upanishad and its inspired Bengali commentary in his crystal-clear English translation.

Prema Nandakumar

Researcher and Literary Critic,  
Srirangam

Yoga, Tantra, iconisation, and spirituality are now much in the publication world, often inundating the seller's shelves. The authentic gets mixed up with the fanciful and we are flabbergasted. Fortunately we get an instant guide for this book in the eminent Siddha scholar, Prof. T N Ganapathy who has written a pointed preface describing the Shambhavi Yogam as 'an esoteric method of reclaiming the energy that is wasted through unnecessary thoughts and using it to attain higher states of consciousness' (5). There is no need to elaborate the manner in which we do waste our energy by watching television incessantly, reading the newspapers for all the blobs of disaster it is plastered with, and of course, indulge in unnecessary talk at home or in office. Amarakavi Siddheshvara tried to find a way to conserve our energy by his personalised yogic technique of Shambhavi Yogam.

Patanjali lists the eight limbs of yoga: a code of morality, self-discipline, physical yoga, breath-control, thought-control, concentration, meditation, and stillness. Of these, thought-control seems the easiest to achieve but it happens to be the most difficult. As the Tamil saint Thayumanavar said, you can control even tigers and elephants but never can the mind be brought under control. Amarakavi Siddheshvara practised Shambhavi Yogam, different from Shambhavi Vidya, which controls the mind and helps in uniting life and the energy that flows through the body. We are told that Amarakavi was helped in this by Lord Ganesha himself, who had been Vyasa's scribe in writing the Mahabharata.

Much of the book is taken up with an explanation of traditional terms like 'Nirvikalpa Samadhi' and 'Advaita Anubhava'. Coming to Amarakavi's achievements, Prabhodaran Sukumar speaks of his integral yoga—not the same as the integral yoga advanced by Sri Aurobindo—that brings together thoughts, breath, and speech. A good deal may have been lost in translation, but enough comes through to assure us that Amarakavi was a yogi engaged in discovering the Brahman in human beings who received messages regarding existence which he recorded in his *Nija Ananda Bodham*. Prabhodaran Sukumar being a direct disciple of Amarakavi, *Shambhavi Yogam* is indeed an authentic version of Amarakavi's exertions in the realm of the spiritual.

Prema Nandakumar



### ***Śāmbhavi Yogam***

Amarakavi Siddheshvara and  
Prabhodaran Sukumar,

Trans. Geetha Anand and M Rajan

Hayagreeva Publication, 108, New  
No. 176, Big Street, Triplicane, Chennai  
600 005. Email: [taponishta@rediffmail.com](mailto:taponishta@rediffmail.com). 2014. 208 pp. ₹ 200. PB. ISBN  
9789380404127.





### **Spiritual Secrets Part II** V R V

Hayagreeva Publication, 108, New No. 176, Big Street, Triplicane, Chennai 600 005. Email: [taponishta@rediffmail.com](mailto:taponishta@rediffmail.com). 2014. 208 pp. ₹ 200. PB. ISBN 9789380404134.

The Siddha tradition is several millennia old. But it has remained within the small circles of adepts and aspirants who have preferred to avoid the glare of publicity. The Internet age has changed all that. Speed and mass contact are the mantras. Unfortunately religion and spirituality have not escaped the web. *Spiritual Secrets* seems to be a victim of this trend.

Amarakavi Siddheshvara (1906–93) lived a quiet life of spiritual seeking, residing in Triplicane, Chennai. He wrote down in English speedily, the thoughts that came to him during such yogic musings. Naturally, he had no time to think of the controlling factors of grammar and diction, or assemble felicities of phrase that could accurately convey his thoughts. There were thousands of pages of such writing. Only two books, *Nija Ananda Bodham* and *The Secret of Tapas* came out during his lifetime. His disciples are now planning to bring out one hundred books based on the manuscripts.

No doubt a laudable attempt to introduce a contemporary siddha yogi to a larger audience, *Spiritual Secrets*, however, is a deep disappointment. Sentence formation and grammar leave much to be desired. Proofreading has been deplorable. The question-and-answer format only confounds the reader. Here is an example: ‘What is evolution vs. yoga? Evolution in its common notions at least should be held in this context to assess its merits with yoga. The human is there caught in the whirlpool of life. It is in its imposition with breath all round. Breath is cosmos ever in its challenge with body life on earth. To redress life there is yoga’ (11).

Unless an able English editor, and a person quite conversant with the terminology of Siddha yoga go through the manuscripts with great care, books like *Spiritual Secrets* will remain inchoate and of no practical use for the aspirant-reader.

*Prema Nandakumar*



### **Lectures on Patanjali's Mahābhāṣya, Vol XI** P S Subrahmanya Sastry

The Kuppaswami Sastry Research Institute, Mylapore, Chennai 600 004. 2012. xxxviii + 399 pp. ₹ 500. HB. ISBN 9788185170510.

Fighting a winning battle has always been difficult for Sanskrit studies in recent times. For the last several decades, the Kuppaswami Sastry Research Institute has been bravely carrying on the fight, with its unconquerable soul. For this we bow to the institute in deep gratitude. How many gems of scholarship have been published by it! P S Subrahmanya Sastry's fourteen-volume *Lectures on Patanjali's Mahābhāṣya* is a shining example of both the institute and the enthusiastic sponsors of Sanskrit scholarship coming together to assure the anxious public that the language remains the captain of India's soul. Planned as a fourteen-volume work by the author, there has been a steady progress in publication since 1962. More than half a century and still two volumes to go! Another instance of Sanskrit scholarship remaining on top in India, despite the menace of years. That is Mother India!

Among the innumerable benefactions of Swami Chandrasekharendra Saraswati of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham, an important one was making the great scholar Subrahmanya Sastry give lectures on Patanjali's *Mahābhāṣya*. Not an easy task this, for one has to be a remarkable grammarian as well to deal with the work. But the Kanchi saint knew his man and the result is now almost complete in the published domain with twelve volumes. A multilingual scholar with an unquenchable thirst to learn and disseminate what he had learnt, Sastry was an ideal teacher to deal with Patanjali's (second century BC) work that is itself a commentary on the very intricate *Ashtadhyayi* of Panini with the help of Katyayana's equally intricate *Varttika*. There is a transparent simplicity about his English which makes both the translation and commentary attractive in spite of the subject being so highly technical and even baffling at times.

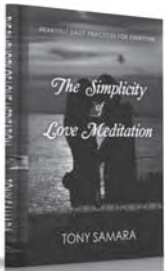
Between the two volumes we have explanation for fifteen *ahnikas*, 57–71. It is amazing how no facet of grammar is spared and so dry a subject



is made easy by sparkling illustrations. The sutra, *antadivascha* in the sixtieth *ahnika*, for instance: This *antadivadbhava* will not act if both the terms have to operate simultaneously. This is understood, but how to explain it? 'There is this illustration from the world. Suppose one is a servant to two of equal status. He does their work in turns. If both send him on errand at the same time and if it is in different directions, he will do the work of neither if he is faithful to both. ... Why will he not do the work of both? On account of the impossibility of doing them simultaneously. Both cannot be done at the same time' (187).

Granted the *Mahabhashya* of Patanjali is for the in-depth scholar, still these volumes are most welcome as they do not frighten away the eager seeker of information about traditional scholarship. Our gratitude to the publishers is indeed immense.

Prema Nandakumar



### **The Simplicity of Love Meditation**

Tony Samara

Tony Samara Books. Website: [www.tonysamarabooks.com](http://www.tonysamarabooks.com). Email: [info@tonysamara.org](mailto:info@tonysamara.org). 2014. 158 pp. \$15.99. PB. ISBN 9780957696440.

With countless books on meditation in the market, a book with a suspicious title involving 'love' and a cover with the silhouette of a couple in embrace, tends to put off the sincere seeker away, doubting that the book would be yet another piece of advice on how to 'make merry' and 'be spiritual'. When the reader cautiously opens this book, one is relieved to find the simple yet emphatic clarification of the author: 'Meditation is an opening up to what is really there rather than trying to push aside what is there so you can be comfortable in the space of relaxation. Relaxation is not a comfortable space; relaxation is an intense, passionate embrace of life. So, if you are a normal human being and you just want to have a break because you want to relax and you think that the meditation will take you away from the intensity of what is going on inside of yourself, then this is not meditation' (9). That is a nice censure on people who think meditation is a tool for removing stress.

This book with ten chapters and seven

appendices is filled with simple techniques of meditations with various breathing techniques that are aimed at making one feel one with the entire universe and that is the real meaning of the word 'love' in the title of this book that was earlier published as *Awaken the Infinite Breath*. A marine biologist by training, a shaman, a spiritual healer, and an avid learner from various faith-traditions like Zen Buddhism, the author has done a commendable job of bringing to us ancient spiritual wisdom in a very lucid language. Every chapter begins with a saying of Kabir, the saint of northern India.

Samara stresses the importance of consciousness: 'It is important that we recognise that whatever is going on in the world is a beautiful mirror that reflects to us the possibility of addressing this situation with consciousness ... it is to realise that with your conscious mind you have the possibility of changing everything. Consciousness touches intention and intention is a very powerful method of moving that energy' (18). Samara encourages us to act immediately and connect with this consciousness: 'not just observing but also by interacting, by being. This is what the world needs today' (24).

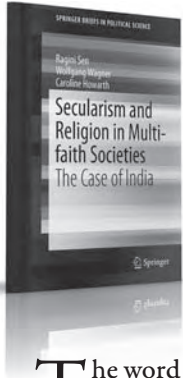
In a world when individuals are increasingly chasing false identities, Samara wants us to look inward: 'This inner identity is the picture that we have unconsciously created. It is mostly an unconsciousness mechanism that happens and we don't even recognise it, unless in certain circumstances we are forced to look at the unconscious energy that comes up in a very obvious situation' (26). He also gives us the detailed method of looking into our selves: 'To work with the inner saboteur means we have to change the picture. ... This is the essence of all meditation and all true spirituality, that first we have to let go of all the pictures that create stress or a lack of joy and come back to a sense of stillness' (27).

The author warns us of the danger of seeing only the evils and missing out on the universal oneness: 'No need to see any negativity, or any limitation to the situation, simply see them as new human beings who have totally transformed and are helping you to transform your relationship to such circumstances. You can imagine many, many things—whatever it is that you need to change' (32). This positive mood of this book continues till the end and the reader gets enthusiastic about

being regular at some simple practices that could give peace to oneself and others.

This book is a welcome read for anyone interested in calming the mind and see oneself as part of an infinite expanse of love, beyond the body and the mind.

PB



**Secularism and Religion in Multi-faith Societies: The Case of India**

Ragini Sen, Wolfgang Wagner, and Caroline Howarth

Springer International Publishing, Gewerbestrasse 11, CH-6330 Cham (ZG), Switzerland. Website: [www.springer.com](http://www.springer.com). 2014. xi + 83 pp. € 51.99. PB. ISBN 9783319019215.

The word 'secularism' generally means 'no religion' but in the Indian context, it has acquired the strange meaning of the state having to do nothing with religion. Hence, in India the government is supposed to be silent on religious matters. This is impossible as religion is an integral part of the lives of the citizens of any nation, more so in India. This has led to the Indian government taking sides on religious issues, the side taken depending upon the ideology of the political party in power. It is unfortunate that India—a country teeming with numerous faith-traditions—should have such a state policy. The best way out is to have the same stance towards all religions or faith-traditions.

This book is the result of a survey conducted across different segments of Indian populace to understand the influence of religion on the country and how sometimes the political ideas and the ground realities are at loggerheads. The authors juxtapose their findings in India with the studies in the West: 'Our research shows that religion is often a central issue in political identity formation, but this is generally not recognized in social debates in the West, which sometimes underestimates the force of religious belief and the connections between religious beliefs and political views' (1).

After giving various definitions of the word 'secularism' and trying to drive home the point that secularism was not something new done

only in India, the authors suddenly attack the 'saffron wave (the color saffron is associated with the hawkish Hindu political parties)' (4). This is not only a jerk to the reader, to say the least, but betrays the ignorance of the authors that the colour 'saffron' is symbolic of renunciation and monastic orders in many faith-traditions of the Sanatana Dharma. That some political parties use it does not rob the colour of its ancient glory. Beginning here, the entire book, written with 'an urgent need to examine the political psychology of secularism' (1), seems to put the entire responsibility of religious conflict on Hinduism and Islam. The authors concentrate only on 'Hindu-Muslim conflict' and are apparently oblivious to the fact that conflict exists amongst many faith-traditions and is not confined to Hindus and Muslims.

When the reader loses hope of finding anything positive, one finds a ray of hope by the positive streak of 'Results and Interpretation' of the survey. Various solutions such as enculturation, change in mindset, and the involvement of civil society are proposed to achieve a harmonious multi-religious society. The authors name Abul Kalam Azad, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, and Bhim Rao Ambedkar as role models of secularism. While Abul Kalam Azad is surely a role model of secularism, of the other two, one failed to understand the needs of the faith-community he was born into, and the other converted to Buddhism because he hated Hinduism. Both are examples of how one can misread a religion than the role models of secularism. True secularism would be when one practises one's religion and does not prevent or facilitate others to practise their faith. Religious acceptance or pluralism cannot be taught by people who do not belong to any faith-tradition. It is surprising that the authors have failed to mention Swami Vivekananda, who was the harbinger of inter-religious dialogue and who believed that there should be as many religions as there are people in this world.

Despite its shortcomings, this book is a small but timely step towards a scientific analysis of religious conflict and the exploration of its solutions, and shows the path for much broader and deeper studies.

PB

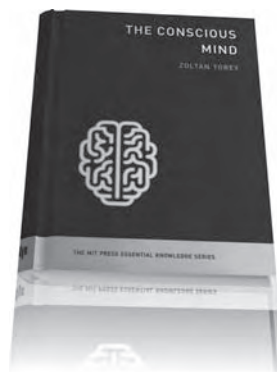
# MANANA

**Exploring thought-currents from around the world.  
Extracts from a thought-provoking book every month.**

## ***The Conscious Mind***

Zoltan Torey

The MIT Press, Massachusetts Institute of Technology,  
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02142. USA. 2014. xiii + 191  
pp. \$15.95. PB. ISBN 9780262527101.



**T**HIS BOOK TACKLES the emergence of the conscious mind. It shows how the brain acquired self-awareness, functional autonomy, the ability to think, and the ability to understand itself and the world. It is a voyage of discovery, all without causing a cosmic headache.

Some two or three years after the publication of my neuroscience-based interdisciplinary work, *The Crucible of Consciousness*, I began to feel that I had not focused enough on the most intriguing problem of human existence: the nature and the reality of free will and our experience of it. Believing that science is the only road to understanding the world and the way it works, I was troubled by the intractable contradictions free will seems to involve. In a world where every event is lawfully anteceded, caused by what has gone before, there seems to be no room for free volition to elbow in on the proceedings. From this it follows that either we are deluded about being free, or the world we live in is that of 'mind-body' dualism, where nonmaterial agencies like causally autonomous minds can play a role and influence outcomes. This is nothing less than a debilitating fault line. Science, unable to account for subjective experience, and the brain, having to fall back on make-believe to make sense, are at a dismal impasse; the challenge is to find the way through.

The volume in your hand suggests a possible solution. It presents an account of the human

brain's augmented functioning that underpins the emergent entity, the mind, and throws light on objective facts and subjective experiences alike. It identifies the brain's new 'off-line' internal response mechanism, its 'second brain' so to speak, with which it accesses itself and then, in combination with brainstem/limbic functions, forms a Darwinian selection mechanism for mentally generated and competing behavioral options. This is a functional breakthrough, one that is impressively straightforward and unexpectedly self-evident. It shows how the animal brain's awareness, its internal representation of the world, became self-accessible and reflective, that is, conscious in the human sense. It shows how protolanguage evolved into language, how a brain subsystem for the emergent mind was built, and why these developments are opaque to introspection. But most importantly, it shows how this new and hitherto unlooked-for and, therefore, undiscovered mechanism furnishes the human brain's emergent mind with the functional autonomy that we experience as free will, yet which is consistent with determinism.

The centrepiece of this writing is the identification of the mind-equipped brain's functional autonomy. I account for its building blocks and specify the part they play in the off-line mechanism's management of the human experience. In the end I hope that the model I am presenting would deserve theoretical physicist John

Archibald Wheeler's words from another context, in which he wondered: 'How could it have been otherwise? How could we all have been so blind for so long?'

If this is how matters stood some seventy years ago, how much more acute must the problem be today when, from nuclear physics and brain-imaging to molecular biology, our knowledge grows exponentially while our fields of expertise narrow? Yet, surprisingly, the problem is not so acute. Insights from all fields of scientific endeavors shed new light on old problems and offer an opportunity to answer questions that transcend the confines of individual domains. The unique solution to the human puzzle is something that the individual disciplines of evolutionary biology, neuroscience, and linguistics cannot hope to discover alone, but it is one that the judicious use of their combined database brings well within reach. It was this combined database that enabled me to reconstruct the sequence of events that led to the human breakthrough and reflective consciousness. Drawing on material from these related yet distinct fields allows us to arrive at a model that makes sense of the disparate subjective and objective aspects of the mind-brain domain, revealing their hidden connectedness. The model identifies the conditions that led to the breakthrough that turned *Homo erectus* into *Homo sapiens* and started the chapter of evolution that is dominated by the emergent entity: the human mind. It is the functional autonomy of the human mind that puts us in the driver's seat, confers upon us the agency to codetermine outcomes, and gives neuroscience a human face.

The neurologist and author Oliver Sacks once observed that three mysteries remain to be solved: 'How did the universe begin?' 'How did life begin?' and 'How did consciousness begin?' He then added that the first two might one day be solved, but the third, as to how consciousness

began, might have to remain a mystery forever. With reference to this last mystery, the model I am proposing will show that once life began, consciousness too had to emerge. This is because consciousness, just like awareness, its nonreflective animal precursor, is the informational source of the brain's behavioral response. In other words, consciousness is not some newly acquired 'quality', 'cosmic principle', 'circuitry arrangement', or 'epiphenomenon', but an indispensable working component of the living system's manner of functioning. It is also likely that, once the universe had begun and the process of complexification was set to run its course, life too, the second of the mysteries, was bound to emerge and progress. This leaves us with the first of these mysteries to contemplate, though with the clarification of mind-brain puzzle, we shall be in a better position than before, when all we had were myths to work with.

In the body of the text, I draw on my earlier work and on the insights and writings of others. A rich and inexhaustible store of knowledge is at my disposal, a bounty for which I am grateful. The book is brief as it deals only with what is essential. It is as accessible as the complexity of the subject matter allows. It is biased on the cross-disciplinary linkages that do not always come to the fore in academia, yet if brought together reveal a single perspective that throws light even on specialists' controversies, such as the nature of children's first language acquisition.

On the occasion of her last visit to Australia, the renowned anthropologist Margaret Mead was asked what she thought of a then popular book that dealt with the impact on society of a destabilizing future. 'The book is worth a chapter', she replied. Having written this unorthodox and densely packed work of not inconsiderable scope, I very much hope that if Mead were asked what she thought of it, she would say: 'Every chapter is worth a book.'





# REPORTS



*Opening of Monks' Quarters at Mayavati*



*Pre-Parliament Event at Vadodara*

## ***Celebration of the 150th Birth Anniversaries of the Monastic Disciples of Sri Ramakrishna***

Ramakrishna Mission Swami Vivekananda's Ancestral House and Cultural Centre held a special lecture on 17 September in commemoration of the 150th birth anniversary of Swami Akhandanandaji Maharaj which was attended by 350 persons.

## ***News of Branch Centres***

Out of the 25 students of the students' home of **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Chandigarh** who appeared in the class-12 exams held by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) this year, 24 passed with the first division marks, 22 of them securing star marks (75 per cent or above), and 1 was placed in compartment.

Swami Gautamanandaji inaugurated the Dr A P J Abdul Kalam Block, a dormitory for high school students, at **Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home, Chennai** on 11 September. A class-10 student of the high school run by the centre secured the third prize for his model in the state level science exhibition competition held jointly by the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, and Tamil Nadu Science and Technology Centre, at a college in Namakkal district on 5 and 6 September.

The 'Sarada Arangan', an open-air auditorium and multipurpose hall, at **Ramakrishna Math, Coimbatore** was inaugurated on 29 August.

The tenth convocation of the **Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda University** for the faculties of Disability Management and Special Education (DMSE) and General and Adapted

Physical Education and Yoga (GAPEY) was held at the University's faculty centre at Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya, Coimbatore on 8 August, in which 222 successful candidates of the above two faculties were awarded certificates and mementos. Prof. Santosh Panda, chairperson, National Council for Teacher Education, New Delhi, delivered the convocation address and awarded the certificates.

Students of the unit of Gadadhar Abhyudaya Prakalpa being run by **Ramakrishna Mission Nivedita Educational and Cultural Centre, Darjeeling** won the following medals in different categories in the State-level Taekwondo (a Korean martial art) Championship held by Vivekananda Institute (Eastern Railway), Halishahar, on 29 and 30 August: Silver Medal: 1 student; Bronze Medal: 3 students.

**Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Mangaluru** conducted three symposia from 9 to 11 September for college students and lecturers. The symposium on 11 September was inaugurated by Sri Vajubhai Rudabhai Vala, governor of Karnataka. In all, about 1,500 people participated in the events.

Two monks' quarters at **Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati** were inaugurated on 28 September.

**Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Mumbai** held a day-long seminar on the theme 'Strengthening Women's Leadership for a Changing World' on 22 August which was attended by about 350 delegates from various NGOs, including corporate officials, budding women entrepreneurs, teachers, and students.

A student of the hostel attached to **Ramakrishna Math, Nagpur** secured third rank in

BSc exams, 2015, conducted by Rashtrasant Tukadoji Maharaj Nagpur University.

A statue of Buddha was installed at **Ramakrishna Mission, Narottam Nagar** on 9 August.

**Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Puri** conducted a youth convention on 11 September in which about 400 youths participated.

Students of **Ramakrishna Mission Boys' Home, Rahara** secured the following ranks in BSc examination, 2015, conducted by West Bengal State University, Barasat: Botany: 5th and 9th; Chemistry: 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th; Mathematics: 1st and 9th; Physics: 4th, 7th, and 8th; and Zoology: 1st and 8th.

The School Education Department, Government of West Bengal, adjudged the high school of **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Ramharipur** the best school in Bankura district considering its good infrastructure, management, and the quality of education offered; and handed over the Best School Award for 2015, comprising a trophy, a certificate, and a sum of 25,000 rupees, on 4 September.

Srimat Swami Vagishanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, inaugurated the publication building and also a permanent exhibition on the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna at **Ramakrishna Ashrama, Rajkot** on 29 August.

Sri V Shanmuganathan, governor of Meghalaya, and Dr Mukul Sangma, chief minister of Meghalaya, visited Vivekananda Cultural

Centre of **Ramakrishna Mission, Shillong** on 6 June and 12 August respectively.

**Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Memorial, Vadodara** hosted a Pre-Parliament event on 9 August, a precursor to the Parliament of World's Religions, Utah, USA, from 15 to 19 October. Scholars belonging to different religions spoke on the subject 'Reclaiming the Heart of Our Humanity'. About 700 people attended the programme. The centre also conducted an international youth conference, inaugurated by Sri O P Kohli, governor of Gujarat, on 10 and 11 August in which nearly 700 youths from 13 countries participated.

## Relief

**Cyclone Relief · West Bengal:** (a) **Barasat** centre distributed 320 saris, 320 tarpaulins, 318 umbrellas, 320 bed-sheets and 320 utensil-sets (each set containing a pot, a *kadahi*, 2 plates, 2 tumblers, 2 bowls, a ladle, a *khunti*, and a bucket) from 31 July to 6 August among 320 affected families living in temporary relief camps in Ashoknagar and Habra municipality in North 24 Parganas district. (b) **Contai** centre distributed 1,600 kg *chira*, 400 kg sugar, and 900 packets of biscuits among 291 families at Kumirda and Itabaria in Purba Medinipur district on 4 and 6 August.

**Distress Relief · Jalpaiguri and Narottam Nagar** centres distributed various items, as shown against their names, to needy people: (a) **Jalpaiguri:** 300 mosquito-nets on 23 August. (b) **Narottam Nagar:** Vests, notebooks, crayons, pencil boxes, toothpaste tubes, toothbrushes, and bars of bathing and washing soaps among 176 students on 12 and 18 September. PB

Monks' Quarters at Mayavati





# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

or AWAKENED INDIA

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started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

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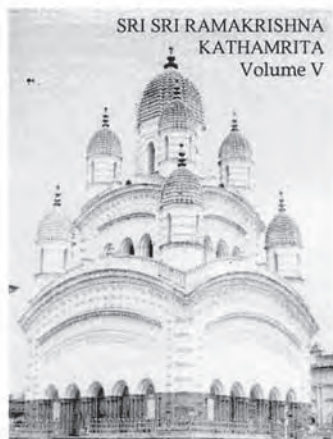
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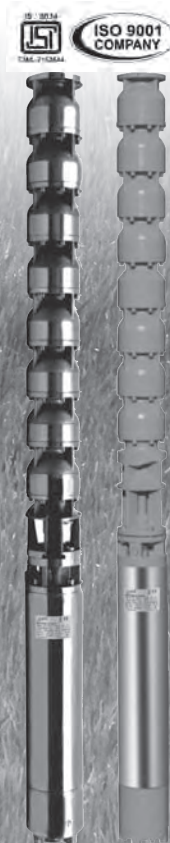
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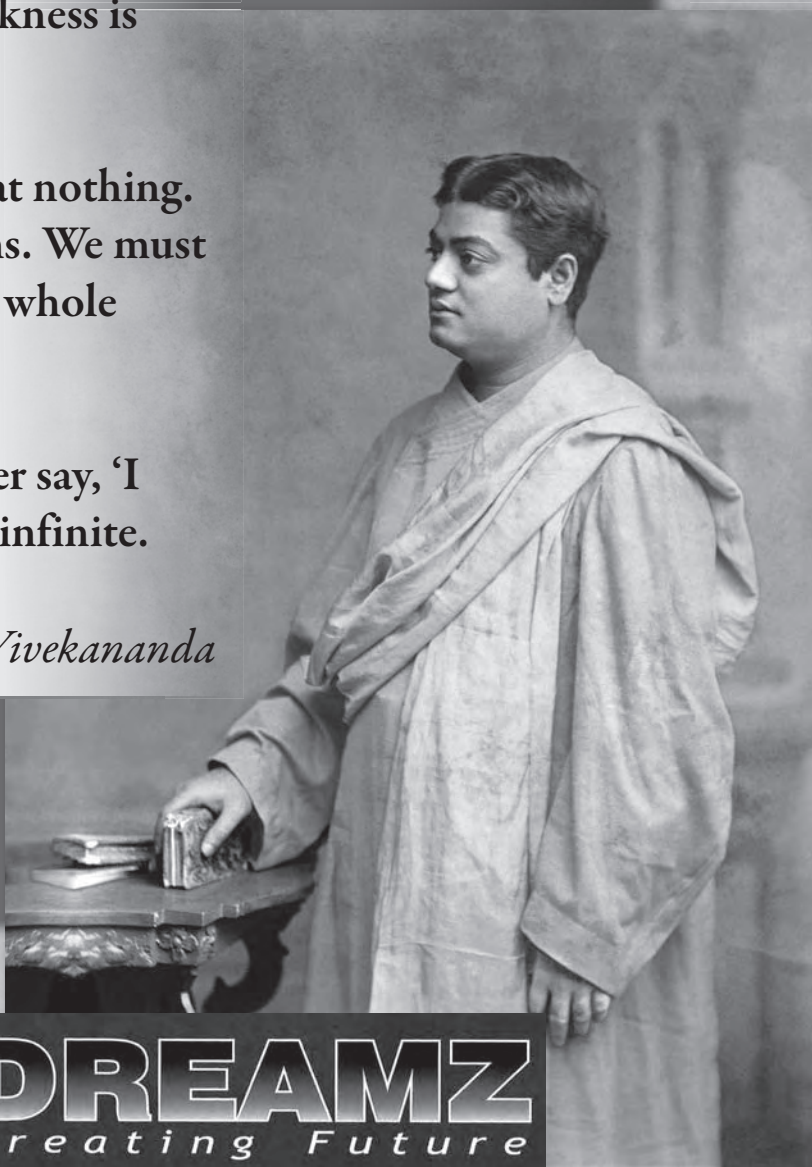
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world.

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